

University of Southampton Research Repository

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis and, where applicable, any accompanying data are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This thesis and the accompanying data cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s. The content of the thesis and accompanying research data (where applicable) must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holder/s.

When referring to this thesis and any accompanying data, full bibliographic details must be given, e.g.

Thesis: Chen. Y (2024) "Narrative inquiry into empathy and language teacher professional identity: Case studies in Chinese secondary public schools and private tutoring institutioⁿ", University of Southampton, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Department of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, PhD Thesis.

University of Southampton

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Department of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics

Narrative inquiry into empathy and language teacher professional identity: Case studies in Chinese secondary public schools and private tutoring institutions

by

Yao Chen

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2024

University of Southampton

Abstract

Faculty of Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Narrative inquiry into empathy and language teacher professional identity: Case studies
in Chinese secondary public schools and private tutoring institutions

By

Yao Chen

This study explores the interplay between empathy and teacher professional identity within the context of English language education in China. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the research investigates the experiences of ten English Language Teachers (ELT) from public schools and private tutoring institutions, focusing on how their empathic interactions with students, parents, and colleagues shape their professional identities.

Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions, which were thematically analyzed to identify patterns and themes related to teacher empathy and identity development. The findings reveal that empathy plays a crucial role in fostering positive relationships and enhancing teachers' self-perception and professional commitment.

The study identifies several key dimensions of teacher professional identity, including identity crisis, identity conflict, and identity reconstruction, demonstrating how these dimensions are influenced by teachers' emotional experiences and the sociocultural

environment. Furthermore, the results highlight the challenges teachers face in balancing emotional demands with professional responsibilities, as well as the impact of institutional policies on their empathic practices.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on teacher identity and emotion, emphasizing the need for educational policies that support the emotional well-being of teachers and recognize the importance of empathy in the teaching profession. The study calls for a more nuanced understanding of how empathy and identity intertwine to inform teacher training programs and curriculum development.

Key words: empathy, emotional experiences, professional identity, well-being, teacher training

Content

Abstract	3
Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship	8
Acknowledgements	9
Chapter 1: Introduction	10
1.1 Background of the Issue	10
1.2 Rationale of the study and research questions	15
1.3 Overview of the research methodology	20
1.4 Thesis Outline	22
Chapter 2: The Research Setting: The Chinese Context.....	24
2.1 Research Background on ELT in China.....	24
2.1.1 A Brief History of ELT and Language Education Policy in China	24
2.1.2 Current Status of English Language Education in Senior Secondary School in China.....	32
2.1.3 Development Track of English Curriculum Policy in Senior Secondary School.....	35
2.1.4 English curriculum reform in high school (Cultivation of affect and attitude).....	37
2.2 An overview of secondary educational institutions in China	41
2.2.1 Nature and background of secondary public schools	41
2.2.2 Nature and background of private tutoring institutions	44
2.3 Conclusion	46
Chapter 3: Literature Review	48
3.1 Theoretical perspectives on emotion	48
3.1.1 Cognitive (Psychological) Perspective	49
3.1.2 Sociocultural perspective	52
3.1.3 Post-structural perspective	54
3.1.4 Ecological perspective	56
3.2 An Overview of Empathy	60
3.2.1 History of Empathy	61
3.2.2 Debates on Defining and Categorizing Empathy	62
3.2.3 The distinction between empathy, sympathy and compassion.....	66
3.2.4 Empathy in Chinese language and cultural contexts.....	68
3.2.5 The process of expressing empathy	70
3.3 Empathy in Language Learning and Teaching.....	74
3.3.1 From Learner Emotion to Teacher Emotion	75
3.3.2 Empathy in education	78
3.3.3 The implication of empathy in language education	83
3.3.4 Emotional Factors Contributing to Teacher Empathy	85
3.4 An Overview of Language Teacher Professional Identity and empathy.....	95
3.4.1 What is ‘Identity’?	96
3.4.2 Teacher professional identity.....	97
3.4.3 Concepts of language teacher identity.....	98

3.4.4 Theories of language teacher identity	99
3.4.5 Factors that influence professional identity	103
3.4.6 Empirical studies on empathy and professional identity	115
3.5 Theoretical framework.....	117
3.6 Conclusion	119
Chapter 4: Methodology.....	121
4.1 Research Questions	121
4.2 Overview of Research Ontological and Epistemological Perspectives.....	121
4.3 Participants	124
4.4 Researcher’s Role	128
4.5 Research Approaches	129
4.5.1 Narrative Inquiry	129
4.5.2 Narrative Case Study	132
4.5.3 Reasons for Choosing Current Research Approaches.....	133
4.6 Data Collection	135
4.6.1 Class observation	135
4.6.2 Semi-structured Interview.....	137
4.6.3 Focus group interviews	139
4.7 Data Analysis	141
4.7.1 Analytical Framework	141
4.7.2 Coding	143
4.7.3 Trustworthiness	145
4.8 Ethical Considerations	147
4.9 Methodology limitations	148
Chapter 5: Narrative Case studies of Chinese ELT Teachers	151
5.1 Case 1: Mr. Chen (an Experienced Public-school English Teacher).....	151
5.1.1 Situations where empathy emerges	152
5.1.2 Ecological factors affecting expressing empathy	159
5.1.3 The development of professional identity within empathy.....	167
5.2 Case 2: Ms. Jia (an Experienced Private-institution Teacher).....	172
5.2.1 Situations where empathy emerged.....	172
5.2.2 Ecological factors affecting empathy	180
5.2.3 The development of professional identity within empathy.....	184
Chapter 6: Cross-case Analysis.....	188
6.1 Situations where empathy emerges in experienced teachers from public schools	188
6.1.1 Teacher-student Interaction	188
6.1.2 Teacher-colleague interaction	195
6.1.3 Teacher-parent interaction	199
6.1.4 Teacher-family interaction.....	201
6.2 Situations where empathy emerges in experienced teachers from private institutions	204
6.2.1 Teacher-student interaction	204

6.2.2 Teacher-colleague interaction	208
6.2.3 Teacher-parent interaction	211
6.2.4 Teacher-family interaction.....	214
6.3 Conclusion	216
Chapter 7: Discussion.....	218
7.1 RQ1: Under what circumstances does empathy arise when teachers interact with different individuals across ecological systems?.....	218
7.1.1 Empathy in teacher-student interaction	219
7.1.2 Empathy in teacher-parent interaction.....	227
7.1.3 Empathy in teacher-colleague interaction.....	229
7.2 RQ2: What causes the differences in how teachers in public and private institutions express empathy across ecological systems?	231
7.2.1 Microsystem.....	231
7.2.2 Mesosystem	238
7.2.3 Exosystem	241
7.2.4 Macrosystem.....	244
7.3 RQ3: What is the role of empathy in teachers' professional identity?	250
7.3.1 Phase 1: Novice teachers	251
7.3.2 Phase 2: Apprentice teachers.....	254
7.3.3 Phase 3: Professional teachers.....	256
7.3.4 Phase 4: Expert teachers.....	259
7.3.5 A model of changes in professional identity within empathy from a longitudinal perspective	261
7.5 Relationship between findings and prior research.....	264
7.5 Conclusion	266
Chapter 8: Conclusion	268
8.1 Empirical findings.....	268
8.2 Implications.....	274
8.2.1 Theoretical implication	274
8.2.2 Practical Implication	279
8.3 Limitations and further research	285
Appendix 1: Consent Form	288
Appendix 2: A Sample of Observational Report.....	290
Appendix 3: Interview questions	301
Appendix 4: Transcript Extract Individual Interview	304
Appendix 5: Transcript Extract Focus Groups	307
References	309

Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Yao Chen

Title of thesis: Narrative inquiry into empathy and language teacher professional identity: Case studies in Chinese secondary public schools and private tutoring institutions

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University.
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated.
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself.
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature: Date:

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to the completion of this research.

First and foremost, I extend my sincere appreciation to my supervisors, Karin Zotmann and Vicky Wright, for their unwavering support, insightful guidance, and valuable feedback throughout the research process. Your encouragement and expertise have been instrumental in shaping this work.

I would also like to thank my colleagues and peers, whose discussions and shared experiences enriched my understanding of the subject matter. Your camaraderie and support made the research journey more enjoyable.

Special thanks to the participants of this study for their willingness to share their experiences and insights. Your contributions provided the foundation for this research and made it possible to explore the intricate dynamics of empathy and professional identity.

Additionally, I wish to acknowledge the support of my family and friends, who stood by me during the challenges of this project. Your patience and belief in my abilities have been a constant source of motivation.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my university for providing the resources and support necessary for this research.

Thank you all for your invaluable contributions.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” (Buehner, 1971)

“Teaching is an emotional process, and the best teachers teach from heart, not from books.” (Notes, 2019)

“A teacher without empathy and compassion is as useless as a book is without light.” (Meehan, 2018)

1.1 Background of the Issue

The three quotations above not only highlight the lasting influence of emotion on life but also emphasize its importance in teaching. It is worth noting the crucial role of empathy in the teaching profession, positioning it as an essential quality for educators. Since the legitimization and popularization of the "emotional intelligence" model in the 1990s, there has been growing interest in teachers' social and emotional skills, including empathy (Campbell, Campbell & Dickinson, 1996; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). With the introduction of social-emotional learning (SEL) theory, the importance of teachers' social and emotional skills, such as empathy, has been widely recognized (Durlak, 2011). These skills are believed to influence not only students' academic achievement but also their long-term prospects and ability to engage in lifelong learning (Zins, 2004).

Therefore, further empirical knowledge about teacher empathy is essential.

Cameron and Seu (2012) advocate for using metaphor to discuss emotional topics, emphasizing that maintaining a balanced emotional distance is necessary to avoid emotional overload. They refer to the 'Goldilocks principle,' which suggests finding the "optimal distance" for empathy—neither too much nor too little emotional involvement. This principle ensures that individuals manage their

emotional responses appropriately. The concept of denial is also mentioned as playing a role in moderating empathic responses. For instance, Salvner (2001) describes a teacher who worried that a student, having experienced abuse, might struggle with a book featuring a protagonist with a similar history. Interestingly, the student did not directly connect with the abuse in the book but instead expressed sadness over the protagonist's struggles with poverty. This demonstrates that empathy and imagination often occur within relational contexts, and teachers can only respond empathically after understanding the students' circumstances. Empathy, being part of the human experience, cannot be measured quantitatively, and thus, qualitative approaches are necessary to observe and describe how empathy is exhibited (Hoffman, 2018). Given that learning occurs in social environments, especially through language interactions, it is meaningful to investigate the phenomena of empathic expressions within a specific community.

My interest in this topic stems from several sources. First, I have had two significant experiences as an English teacher in different settings—public schools and private tutoring institutions. These environments provided diverse and inspiring experiences, motivating me to conduct research based on these contexts. Second, the exam-oriented nature of the Chinese education system, where both schools and parents are heavily focused on academic results, often requires teachers to prioritize exam performance over broader educational goals. This contradicts my initial motivation for becoming a teacher. I believe that teachers should not merely be exam-focused machines; instead, through continuous interaction, they should build rapport and emotional connections with students to inspire learning and facilitate personal growth.

Unlike other subjects, second language learning is a complex and multidimensional process, involving cognitive, social, and cultural elements, as it centers on communication, social interaction, and immersion in a new linguistic

system (Vygotsky, 1978; Krashen, 1981; Dörnyei, 1998; Byram, 1997). Teaching English as a foreign language in the Chinese cultural context presents additional challenges for both teachers and students. The intense pressure of the job led me to leave my position and pursue further studies. This decision gave me the opportunity to reflect on the teaching profession and the role of teachers, prompting me to pay greater attention to the emotional experiences of educators. During my studies in the UK, I experienced a shift in motivation, as the absence of exam pressure and rankings allowed me to focus on learning for its own sake. The encouragement from my professors, rather than criticism, further fueled my enthusiasm for research.

Reflecting on my past teaching experiences, along with the experiences of peers who faced similar challenges, sparked my curiosity about the emotional experiences and professional identity of English language teachers. During my master's degree, I explored the role of intercultural empathy in English language learning and teaching, but I felt that I had only scratched the surface of this issue. I realized that I still lacked a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between empathy and the professional identity of English language teachers in non-English-speaking countries. This curiosity ultimately led me to pursue this PhD.

Throughout my PhD journey, my ideas and conceptions of empathy and emotion evolved. Research on empathy draws from a wide range of theoretical perspectives, including psychology, sociology, and education. One predominant approach is the cognitive perspective, which highlights the role of cognitive processes in empathic responses (Corcoran, 1981). Batson (2011) distinguishes between cognitive empathy (understanding others' emotions) and emotional empathy (feeling others' emotions), exploring the motivations behind empathic

behavior. In the psychological model of emotional intelligence, empathy is considered a key factor in perceiving and responding to emotions in oneself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). From a sociocultural perspective, Vygotsky (1978) provides a framework for understanding empathy by highlighting the role of social interaction in the development of cognition and emotion, indicating how empathy is influenced by social and cultural backgrounds. However, both cognitive and sociocultural perspectives emphasize only singular aspects of empathy, neglecting the combined effects of personal and environmental factors. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) offers a more comprehensive perspective, providing insights into how empathy is shaped by individual interactions within different ecological systems.

Teacher empathy and professional identity are crucial components of the educational field, influencing not only teaching effectiveness but also educators' overall well-being and development. Empathy, particularly the ability to understand and share students' feelings, plays a critical role in fostering a supportive and effective learning environment. Research shows a strong correlation between empathy and teacher-student interactions, which in turn impacts student engagement and learning outcomes (Zhang, 2022). Professional identity refers to teachers' self-concept regarding their roles, responsibilities, and experiences. It is a dynamic construct shaped by personal beliefs, emotional experiences, and social interactions. Cultivating a strong professional identity is essential, as it can affect teachers' motivation, efficiency, and emotional well-being (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2012).

Empathy and professional identity are mutually influential. Empathetic and caring teachers are more likely to support and enhance students' well-being, which in turn reinforces their professional identity as effective educators. Conversely, teachers who struggle with their professional identity may find it difficult to display

empathy, leading to less effective teaching and reduced student engagement (Cheng, 2021). Furthermore, emotion plays an essential role in the development of professional identity. Both positive and negative emotional experiences can shape teachers' attitudes toward their roles and responsibilities. Research shows that negative emotions, such as frustration and helplessness, have a greater impact on professional identity than positive emotions (Pillen et al., 2013). Therefore, teacher training should address emotional experiences and provide strategies for effective emotional management.

Understanding the significance of empathy and professional identity can contribute to teacher training and development. Training programs should focus on helping teachers develop a strong professional identity and improve their empathic skills, which can be achieved through reflective practice, peer learning, and emotional management resources (Noonan, 2018). Moreover, professional development initiatives should highlight the importance of emotional well-being and provide resources for managing emotions effectively (Zhao, 2022). By reviewing different theoretical perspectives on empathy and the interplay between empathy and professional identity, I realized that my investigation must integrate both empathy and emotion to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Regarding my working experiences in public schools and private institutions, the research decided to select teachers from these two different contexts. Due to disparities in institutional structures, educational goals, teacher roles, emotional labor, and ecological systems between the two educational settings, the ways in which teachers experience and express empathy may differ—potentially influencing the research findings. Public schools are deeply rooted in the national educational system and are heavily influenced by policies and standardized tests

(particularly GaoKao). This environment often brings a rigid framework and pressure, constraining teachers' emotional devotion. Comparatively, private institutions are more market-oriented, flexible and customer-centered. Teachers often exhibit empathy led by customers' satisfaction and personalized service. Therefore, institutional backgrounds not only create conditions under which empathy arises but also ways to display empathy, highlighting different professional and emotional needs for teachers.

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the study shows that teacher empathy is affected by multiple-layer environments (e.g. micro-system, macro-system). There is a significant disparity between ecological conditions of public schools (e.g., class-scale, complex hierarchy, and policy constraints) and private institutions (e.g., higher parent engagement, and commercial motivation), forming different contexts to stimulate empathy. Thus, comparative methods can help to trace how teachers' emotional experiences and empathy are embedded in these different ecological systems. Moreover, narrative inquiry can benefit from comparative case analysis. By distinguishing public and private contexts, the researcher can illuminate unique stories, meanings and emotional landscapes that would be obscured in a homogenized analysis.

1.2 Rationale of the study and research questions

When a friend cries over the loss of a loved one, we feel their sadness. When colleagues make mistakes and feel ashamed, we feel embarrassed on their behalf. When our students succeed and smile, we share in their happiness. Empathy—the ability to feel what others feel—is pervasive, yet it poses a challenge because it often conflicts with our assumptions about our own emotions and goals (Frijda, 1998; Moors, 2010). In fact, empathy is considered to be a response more suited to others' situations than to our own (Hoffman, 2000).

Traditionally, emotion and empathy have been studied separately. Emotion theories have rarely explored the emotions of others, despite some social approaches that examine how emotions are influenced by external factors (e.g., Bulter, 2011; van Kleef, 2009). These approaches highlight how our emotions are directly affected by those around us. Social appraisal theories, for example, suggest that people use the emotions of others to evaluate their own situations (Manstead & Fischer, 2001; Parkinson, 2011). Similarly, group emotion theory posits that group membership can alter emotions, as individuals feel compelled to conform to group stereotypes and align their personal goals with those of the group (Mackie et al., 2008). While these theories explore how our emotions are influenced by others, they do not address how we generate emotions for others when in different contexts or groups. Empathy theories, on the other hand, discuss the ability to generate emotions for others but treat empathy as a distinct phenomenon, separate from the emotional process driven by firsthand experience. Furthermore, current empathy theories focus primarily on situations where the observer and the target experience the same emotion, overlooking other, more indirect emotional experiences. This focus on matching emotions isolates empathy as an independent phenomenon (Gallese et al., 2004; Keysers & Gazzola, 2009).

Emotion theories have neglected empathic emotions, while empathy theories have provided specific interpretations of empathic emotions that differ from explanations of individual emotions. However, empathic emotions are just as real as any other emotions; they can strike us quickly and disrupt our focus, much like other emotional experiences. There is no reason to believe that empathic emotions differ fundamentally from ordinary emotions. Therefore, combining

these two theoretical perspectives can enhance our understanding of both empathy and emotion.

Empathy is a complex and multidimensional concept that has been explored in the field of psychology, education and applied linguistics. Despite its wide application, it has not formed a commonly accepted conception. Scholars continuously debate on how to define it. The term 'empathy' originates from the German word 'Einfühlung', meaning 'feeling into', and firstly used in the field of aesthetics before being introduced into psychology (Tichener, 1909). Since then, empathy has evolved as a psychological concept covering cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions (Davis, 1990).

One of the central debates on defining empathy is the distinction between the cognitive and emotional components. Cognitive empathy refers to the ability to understand others' perspectives and mental states (Baron-Cohen, 1995). It often relates to concepts like 'perspective-taking' and 'theory of mind'. Comparatively, emotional empathy involves sharing and resonating with others' emotional states—feeling others rather than only understanding them (Batson, 1991). Although these two aspects are mutually linked, they may function independently. For example, a person may intellectually understand others' distress but cannot emotionally feel it—or vice versa.

Empathy later was theorized as a trait (a stable personality) (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972), a skill that can be imparted and developed (Gerdes et al., 2011), a dynamic interpersonal process emerging in a specific social context (Zembylas, 2005; Hoffman, 2000). The diversity in conceptualization mirrors the interactive and contextual nature of empathy, particularly in education, influenced by norms and

emotional labor (Hargreaves, 1998; Zembylas, 2007). In the field of education, empathy is believed a key to build the teacher-student relationship, promote class engagement and support emotional health (Cooper, 2011; Yin et al., 2019). Batson et al. (2004) defined empathy as a kind of emotional reaction directed by others, aligning with their perceptions of well-being, including emotions like sympathy, compassion and tenderness.

Teacher empathy is an emerging area of interest in applied linguistics, though much remains to be explored. The diverse definitions of empathy have led researchers to examine empathy from multiple perspectives, with many viewings it as an ability or skill that can be developed or trained in educational settings (Cooper, 2011; Holmberg, 2003). When empathy was first introduced into second language acquisition (SLA), it was regarded as a strategy for intercultural communication. Some researchers developed the concept of cultural empathy, suggesting it could address challenges arising from cultural differences, such as stereotypes, conflicts, and barriers (Ruben, 1976; Elems, 2013; Gao, 2005).

With the rise of positive psychology in SLA, scholars have begun to examine empathy from new perspectives (Oxford, 2016). A more recent direction of empathy research links it to emotion. Batson et al. (2004) define empathy as an other-oriented emotional response to another's well-being, encompassing feelings such as sympathy and compassion. Building on this, Oxford (2016) developed a comprehensive model to explore the factors that influence wellbeing, grouping empathy and emotion together. Her theoretical model, "EMPATHICS," identifies key psychological dimensions of learner well-being: E for emotion and empathy; M for meaning and motivation; P for perseverance; A for agency and autonomy; T for time; H for habits of mind; I for intelligence; C for character strengths; and S for self-factors, particularly self-efficacy.

According to Oxford, emotion and empathy are the core of language learning. Positive emotions, such as enjoyment, interest and curiosity, can enhance learning motivation, promoting deep learning. Empathy enables learners and teachers to understand others and build a rapport with them, particularly in intercultural communication. Another relevant element—emotional intelligence (EI) can help to recognize and manage one’s own emotions, which plays a vital role in constructing a supportive classroom environment.

Oxford’s ‘EMPATHICS’ model integrates cognitive and emotional dimensions, encouraging to adopt a holistic pedagogy. It aligns with the principle of positive psychology that concerns students’ well-being, advantages and development rather than shortage or failure. As for language teachers, this model provides a framework used to design a learner-centered and emotionally supportive classroom. However, Oxford (2016) also argues that empathy remains an underexplored issue in SLA. This gap aroused the researcher’s desire to understand teacher empathy from the emotional perspective and how they demonstrate empathy in their daily teaching, thereby affecting their professional identity.

While researchers have acknowledged the importance of empathy in language learning (Chen, 2008; Dewaele & Wei, 2012; Guiora, 1972), studies on how empathy influences teachers’ professional development remain scarce. Most empirical research on empathy uses quantitative approaches, often relying on psychological scales such as the empathy quotient to measure individual empathy or to identify correlations with other variables (DeWall et al., 2008; Rosenstell, 2020; Stosic et al., 2022). However, there is little in-depth exploration of how and why empathy influences individuals or their professional growth. To address this gap, this study adopts qualitative methods to investigate the

circumstances under which teacher empathy arises, how teachers use empathy in their interactions, and the role of empathy in their professional development.

The study aims to examine the role of empathy in shaping the professional identity of English language teachers in Chinese public high schools and private tutoring institutions (PTIs). Narrative case studies are used to explore teachers' emotional experiences and empathic interactions with students, parents and colleagues and investigate how these experiences influence the development of teachers' professional identities under different ecological and institutional contexts. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. Under what circumstances does empathy arise when teachers interact with different individuals across ecological systems?

(1) How do they emotionally react to such situations?

(2) What kinds of emotions will evoke teacher empathy?

2. What causes the differences in how teachers in public and private institutions express empathy across the ecological systems?

3. What is the role of empathy in teachers' professional identity?

The significance of the study is twofold. One is to raise awareness of a crucial phenomenon but often ignored that empathy has multiple functions in language learning and teaching; the other is to develop a theory that can link English language teachers' empathy to their emotions and identity.

1.3 Overview of the research methodology

This study employs qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Given the limited research on the interplay between teacher empathy and professional

identity in China, this study is exploratory, descriptive, and interpretative in nature. The data were used to deeply explore teachers' empathic experiences when interacting with different stakeholders (students, parents, and colleagues) related to their professional roles, aiming to uncover the factors influencing their expressions of empathy from an ecological perspective. Additionally, the study examines how empathy contributes to the professional identity of English language teachers (ELT).

Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that case studies are effective for describing, analyzing, and interpreting real-life situations and individual characteristics, enabling researchers to explore the complexity and contextuality of behavior. As a researcher, I adopted a case study design to investigate the life experiences of ten ELT teachers, drawn from both a public school and a private tutoring institution.

Data were collected through classroom observations, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. Given the distinct characteristics of the two educational institutions, participants were divided into two groups. A within-case analysis was conducted to address Research Question 1 (RQ1), identifying the similarities in situations where empathy was exhibited. For Research Question 2 (RQ2), a comparative case analysis was employed to explore how empathy differs between teachers from public schools and private tutoring institutions (PTIs).

Finally, recognizing that identity development is a dynamic process, the study examines key events at different stages of the teachers' careers to observe their identity construction. Throughout this identity development process, the study explores how empathy affects identity reconstruction and how the external

environment shapes both empathy expression and identity formation. Data were cross-referenced to ensure trustworthiness, and results were thematically analyzed through an interpretative lens using narrative analysis.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The thesis consists of six chapters.

Chapter One is the introduction, providing an overview of the research background, aim, and purpose and explaining why the researcher chooses this topic.

Chapter Two sets the context of this study and focuses on the development of ELT in China, educational reform and policy, and characteristics of the Chinese secondary educational system.

Chapter Three is the literature review, which explicitly reviews the theory and empirical studies related to the research theme. It presents the research gap in relevant fields and forms a theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter Four is the methodology. The researcher explains the reasons for the approaches employed in the study and elaborates on the data analysis process.

Chapter Five presents the findings of the research, focusing on the key themes that have been identified in data analysis and discusses the results analysis of the interview transcripts, observation and focus group session.

Finally, **Chapter Six** draws upon the entire thesis, tying up the various topic discussed in this study. It also provides a summary and critique of the findings and includes a discussion of the limitations and implications of the findings geared towards further research in the realm of teacher empathy in applied linguistics.

Chapter 2: The Research Setting: The Chinese Context

This chapter is included to provide a comprehensive understanding of educational, cultural and policy backgrounds the study is situated. By examining the structure of Chinese ELT, particularly in the high-school English teaching. This chapter constructs a fundamental context for shaping experiences of students, teachers, and institutions. Understanding this background is essential to interpret the research findings since it highlights the systemic, historical, and sociocultural factors that may influence teachers' affective experiences and their empathy for professional identity.

2.1 Research Background on ELT in China

This section discusses the historical development of ELT in China with a focus on the senior secondary level of education, including language education planning and policy (LPP) and national English curriculum of the public school. An overview of two typical Chinese secondary educational systems will be introduced, which is the further contexts in this study.

2.1.1 A Brief History of ELT and Language Education Policy in China

This section reviews the history of ELT in China and describes English language education policy from the establishment of the People of Republic of China (PRC) until the present day. An overview of the development of ELT is helpful to understand the significance of English in Chinese basic education (primary and secondary education).

2.1.1.1 Overview of Language Education Policy

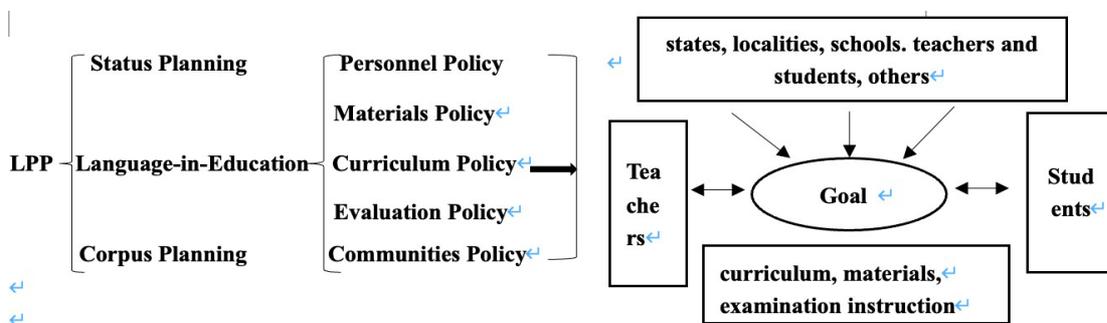
Language education policy encompasses both language policy and education policy. To fully understand this concept, it is essential to first review what language policy entails. Language policy, also known as language planning, refers to a state-planned and purposeful management program for language-related matters. Haugen (1959) was the first to define language planning as concerned with the status of language, aimed at addressing language challenges in developing countries. Initially, research on language planning primarily focused on the language itself; however, it later shifted toward its application and practice, encompassing aspects such as language status, language learning, and language communication (Spolsky & Shogamy, 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997).

While language policy and language planning are often used interchangeably in many texts, some scholars differentiate between the two terms from various perspectives. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) argue that language policy is a subset of language planning. The implementation of language planning allows governments or authorities to establish language policies, while language planning is also constrained by existing language policies. Conversely, language policy is seen as the unofficial principles and cultural frameworks produced by the community (MacCarty, 2011; Schiffman, 1996; Spolsky, 2004). Johnson (2013) summarizes that the mechanism of language policy is to influence the structure, function, usage, or acquisition of language through official rules and regulations, which, in turn, impact areas such as economics, politics, and education. Additionally, some unofficial and implicit rules related to language beliefs and practices can regulate language usage within communities, workplaces, and schools.

Language planning can be categorized into three types: status planning, corpus planning, and acquisition planning (Cooper, 1989). Status planning refers to

policies related to the selection, promotion, and dissemination of different languages within a nation, while corpus planning pertains to the planning of the language itself, such as its standardization (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). Acquisition planning, also known as language-in-education planning, operates at the micro level of language policy, focusing on classroom teaching and learning activities. This includes decisions regarding the choice of teaching language, target learners, and teaching hours. The purpose of language-in-education planning is to examine the relationship between language policy goals and educational practices, thereby facilitating the achievement of these goals within the educational realm (Zhou, 2005). Key components of language-in-education planning include curriculum policy, personnel policy, materials policy, community policy, and evaluation policy (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997), with curriculum policy being the core of language policy planning (LPP). Below is a chart outlining the content of LPP:

Figure 2.1: The content of LPP in Chinese secondary education



Curriculum Policy refers to the guidelines that influence teaching contents in the school (Elmore & Sykes, 1992). Wang (2008) indicates that the curriculum objective is the key element of curriculum policy, which explains why the policy is made and conducted. The subject of curriculum policy is the maker and conductor, and the object is the text form of the courses including course syllables, materials, and the examination instruction. These text documents contain abundant information that grantee the achievement of the curriculum objective. Cooper

(1989) highlights that language planning is who plans what for whom and why. Therefore, language planning is consistent with curriculum policy.

The content of language planning involves native language education, second language education and foreign language education (Cooper, 1989). Foreign language education planning has constantly received attention from governments and educational institutions from all over the world. The focus of foreign language reform is the reform of foreign language curriculum, and curriculum policy is the key factor that influences the curriculum development, the guideline of curriculum reform and the most effective way that transforms curriculum theories into curriculum practice. In other words, curriculum reform of foreign language is the process to implement curriculum policy (Chan & Mok, 2011). Since 1990s, the concern of educational reform has been centered on elementary education. Many countries have set off a huge wave of reform of foreign language courses in primary and secondary schools, and each stage of curriculum reform is followed by updates of curriculum policy. The curriculum policy has been the primary content of language planning. Specifically, it includes deciding start time of curriculum and making the curriculum standard, curriculum design, teaching materials, teaching patterns and teaching methods. As a global language, English has become the priority in foreign language planning of many countries. Indeed, foreign language education planning of many countries are primarily developed with English language curriculum.

As for education policy, it is regarded as a single or a series of explicit or implicit decisions that can make some guidelines to direct further decisions or the conduction of previous decisions (Eyal & Inbar, 2003). In China, educators assert that education policy is the behavioral principles made by a party or nation to achieve the educational tasks in a specific period (Yuan, 1996; Sun, 1997).

Educational policy plays an essential role in the modern educational development, and many educational activities of the government are achieved by policy (Liu, 2002). As language education policy intersects with both language policy and education policy, it not only reflects language policy within the educational field but also serves as a set of plans and recommendations specifically aimed at guiding language education.

2.1.1.2 A Brief History of ELT in China

Bolton and Graddol (2012) indicate that Chinese education has undergone a tumultuous evolution in foreign language education policy since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The development of ELT in China has been significantly influenced by the political, economic, social, and educational needs of different periods (Hu, 2002). The development of ELT has experienced five phases since the establishment of the PRC, with each phase defined by varying ELT policies that have influenced objectives, content, and methodologies (Silve et al., 2002). This section will discuss the shifts in English language policies during each period and their impact on curriculum standards and pedagogical approaches.

- **Russian as the Dominant Foreign Language (1949-1956)**

Due to the close relationship with the Soviet Union, Chinese citizens were encouraged to learn Russian, which significantly influenced foreign language education. Russian language courses were introduced in secondary and higher education in 1952 (Yao, 1993), while English language education declined (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a; McGuire, 1997; Ross, 1992). In 1954, the Ministry of Education mandated the removal of English courses from the junior secondary curriculum, establishing Russian as the primary foreign language taught throughout the country (Tang & Gao, 2000). Influenced by Soviet methods, the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was adopted in English language teaching

during the 1950s, focusing primarily on grammar rules and vocabulary. Class time was predominantly spent on intensive reading and writing, with minimal attention given to listening and speaking (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Translation exercises were frequently employed to manipulate the morphology and syntax of the target language (Stern, 1983). It was believed that GTM effectively facilitated foreign language acquisition by ensuring mastery of grammar rules, with successful learning considered largely a matter of memorization (Hou, 1987).

- **Recovery of English Education (1957-1965)**

Anticipating a growing need for advanced technology and expanding diplomatic and trade relations with Western countries, the late 1950s saw a resurgence of English language education. The deterioration of relations with the Soviet Union heightened awareness of the importance of English language learning. Subsequently, English was reintroduced into the junior secondary curriculum (Ross, 1992). At this point, English solidified its status as China's primary foreign language. With the introduction of Western literature on foreign language teaching, the Direct Method gained popularity, based on the hypothesis that individuals can learn a second language in the same way they acquire their native language. This approach placed increased emphasis on listening and speaking, with students learning through direct interaction with teachers. Auxiliary teaching methods, such as the use of pictures and posters to teach vocabulary, also became common (Brandle, 1993; Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

- **Rejection of Foreign Language Education (1966-1976)**

Just as foreign language education began to develop steadily, the Cultural Revolution commenced in 1966, aiming to create a new society by dismantling traditional Chinese beliefs and culture while eliminating foreign cultural influences (Fairbank, 1992). In the initial years, all foreign language broadcasts were banned, and the importation of foreign language books was prohibited. English language teaching courses were removed from secondary school

curricula as the study of foreign languages was perceived as a form of foreign worship (Tang & Gao, 2000). Consequently, foreign language education suffered greatly during this turbulent period.

- **Revival of Foreign Language Education (1976-1997)**

Following the Cultural Revolution, China entered a new era of development, restoring progress in political, economic, cultural, and educational spheres (Mackerras et al., 1998). With the implementation of the national policy of "reform and opening up," the Ministry of Education held a conference on foreign language education in 1978 (Mao & Min, 2004). English was reestablished as the primary foreign language in the education system, providing China with opportunities to acquire scientific knowledge and technological advancements (Adamson, 2004). In the early years of reform, the teaching approach combined elements of GTM and the Audiolingual Method (ALM). Influenced by ALM, television and radio channels introduced various English learning programs, leading to a surge in English language acquisition. Despite challenging learning conditions, enthusiasm for English education reached new heights (Fu, 1986). However, two significant problems emerged after a period of reliance on ALM: students struggled to transfer skills acquired through repetitive drills to real-world communication, and their learning often lacked meaningful engagement with the language.

- **English Education Reform and Development (1999 to Present)**

By the early 1990s, China's political situation stabilized, and rapid economic growth ensued. To enhance cooperation in technology, culture, and information exchange with other countries, there was a pressing need for integrated foreign language education (Meitner, 1999). In 2001, the Ministry of Education enacted guidelines to promote English courses in primary schools, mandating that English instruction begin in Grade 3 (Li, 2007; Hu, 2007; Wang, 2007). Two years later, the Ministry of Education's Department of Basic Education reformulated a standards

based curriculum for English language education in primary and secondary schools. The English Curriculum Standards were categorized for compulsory and senior secondary education, outlining nine levels of proficiency across five areas: language skills, language knowledge, attitudes and affect, learning strategies, and cultural awareness (Gu, 2012). The curricular reforms shifted the focus of English language learning from mere acquisition to the development of comprehensive language abilities.

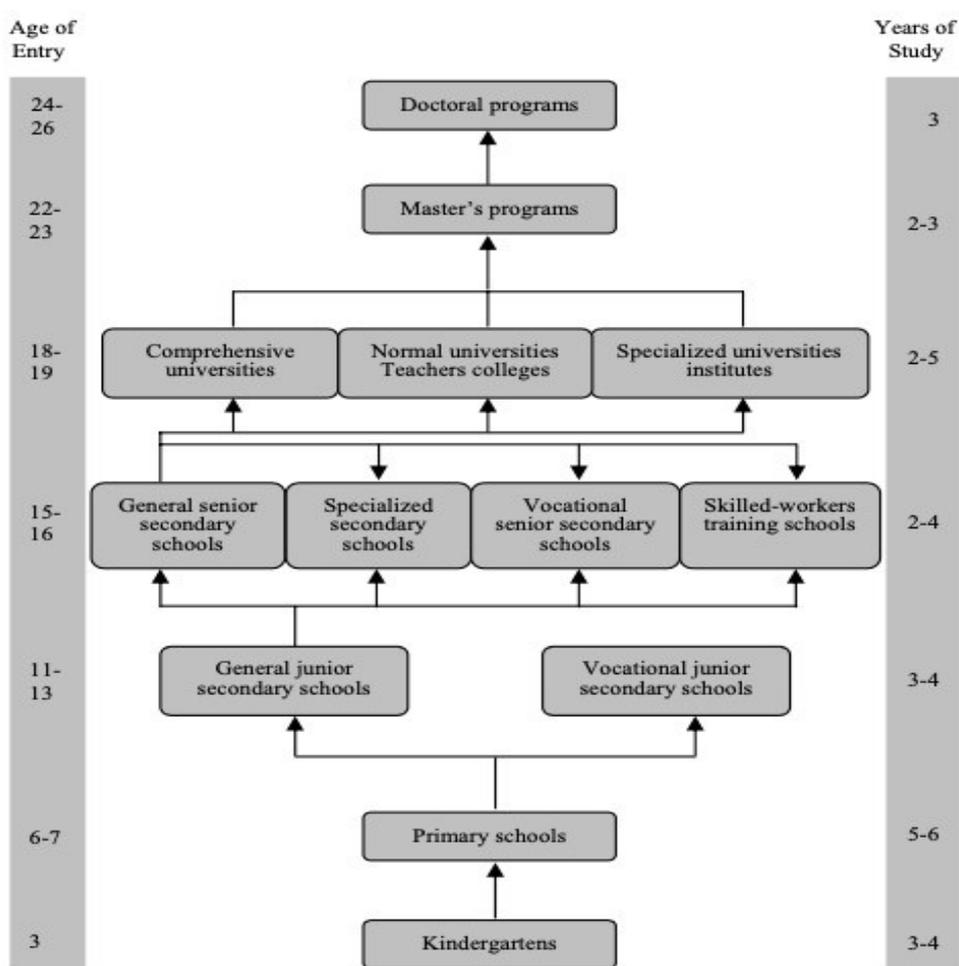
In this phase, English teaching methods diversified (Yao, 1993). The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, prevalent worldwide, was also introduced into English language instruction in China; however, its implementation in secondary schools did not meet expectations (Yu, 2001). CLT emphasizes meaning and suggests that teaching should focus on communicative functions (Hymes, 1971), which occasionally conflicted with the objectives of English examinations requiring students to memorize vocabulary and learn grammar rules for written assessments. While debates about CLT continued among Chinese scholars, alternative teaching approaches also gained traction. Notably, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has been recommended in several recent policy documents, including the English Curriculum Standards. In TBLT, language learning and teaching center around completing pedagogic tasks that prepare learners for real-world language use (Brown, 2007b). Furthermore, technological advancements have been integrated into English language education, providing additional online materials and employing tools like PowerPoint to present grammar concepts (Li & Walsh, 2010). Consequently, current teaching methodologies are no longer confined to a single approach but blend various methods to effectively achieve educational goals.

2.1.2 Current Status of English Language Education in Senior Secondary

School in China

The formal education system in the PRC is complex, featuring multi-tiered administration. Despite this, English language education is present at all educational levels. Figure 2.1 illustrates the various stages of education, providing a brief overview of the educational system.

Figure 2.2 The regular education system of the PRC



Most Chinese children in urban areas or economically developed cities attend kindergarten from the age of three to six to receive a preprimary instruction. Then they go to primary school for six years and junior secondary school for three years.

The nine years of education is compulsory for all students. After finishing compulsory schooling, students can choose different types of senior education. Most of them will enter general senior secondary schools as this is the only way for them to have opportunities to go to university (Feng, 2009). There are three types of university in China: the normal university, which focuses on teacher training; the specialist university, which provides a specific discipline such as engineering or commerce; the comprehensive university, which includes all the main disciplines (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Ji, 2002). As the research context is selected in senior secondary schools, there will be an elaborate description of English language education in this phase based on the curriculum standard.

Chinese elementary education consists of compulsory education (primary and junior secondary) and senior secondary education. There are two English curriculum standards the stage of elementary education in which English proficiency is divided into nine levels (Table 2.1).

Figure 2.3 The content of curriculum standards in elementary education

Phase	Compulsory Education	Senior Secondary Education
Curriculum	<i>'English Curriculum Standard'</i> (The Ministry of Education, 2011)	<i>'English Curriculum Standard'</i> (The Ministry of Education, 2003)
Level	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	6, 7, 8, 9
Objective	Form a preliminary comprehensive language ability	Develop a preliminary comprehensive language ability
Content	Language skills, language knowledge, affect and attitude, learning strategies and cultural awareness	Language skills, language knowledge, affect and attitude, learning strategies and cultural awareness

In senior secondary school, students receive five English lessons per week in the first two years, and the number of English lessons is doubled in the last year as students prepare National College Entrance Examination (Feng, 2009; Wang & Lam, 2009). The requirement of English levels that students at senior secondary schools should reach is the continuity of compulsory education (See in Figure 2.3). English language education at this stage particularly emphasizes on developing comprehensive language ability, through which 'students can use English to process information, to analyze and solve problems, and to think and express themselves' (Wang & Chen, 2012, p.92).

2.1.3 Development Track of English Curriculum Policy in Senior Secondary School

As previously mentioned, curriculum policy is the core of Language Policy and Planning (LPP), with curriculum objectives serving as its most significant manifestation. The development of curriculum policy in senior secondary schools can be divided into five stages based on the dominant characteristics of curriculum objectives:

1. Language Knowledge-Oriented Period (1949-1977)

During this period, three curriculum standards were published, requiring students to master a certain volume of vocabulary and to read texts using dictionaries. The focus was on cultivating translating competence, with course arrangements primarily centered on vocabulary learning. Intensive reading of model essays dominated the textbooks, making vocabulary acquisition the most prominent learning objective during this time (Ministry of Education, 1956; 1978).

2. Language Skill-Oriented Period (1978-1984)

The Ministry of Education revised the English curriculum standards for primary and secondary schools every two years, emphasizing the necessity of cultivating students' language skills, particularly their reading competence and self-study abilities. The focus shifted toward grammar learning, based on the belief that grammatical knowledge is foundational for developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Ministry of Education, 1978; 1982; 1984).

3. Language Practice Period (1985-1991)

Following the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in China, vocabulary learning was redefined in the curriculum standards, which included specific requirements for the volume of vocabulary that students needed to master. Consequently, students were expected to develop

competencies in listening, speaking, and writing, while also being able to read independently with the assistance of a dictionary.

4. Language Communication-Oriented Period (1992-2000)

During this time, the Ministry of Education issued three curriculum standards that emphasized the cultivation of communicative competence, focusing on the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Reading competence was prioritized, as it allowed students to develop self-learning abilities and lay a solid foundation for further English learning and usage (Ministry of Education, 1998a; 1998b).

5. Comprehensive Language Ability-Oriented Period (1999 to 2017) A

significant curriculum reform in elementary education commenced in 1999, following extensive explorations into various orientations of English language education. The curriculum standards clearly stated the objective of developing students' comprehensive language abilities, encompassing language skills, knowledge, learning strategies, cultural awareness, and affective attitudes. Wang & Chen (2012) explained that language skills and knowledge form the foundation for comprehensive language use; affective attitudes significantly influence students' learning and development; and learning strategies are essential for enhancing learning efficiency and fostering self-directed learning (Ministry of Education, 2000a; 2000b; 2000c; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c).

In conclusion, the curriculum objectives have evolved from an initial focus on language knowledge to the use of language for communication, then to an emphasis on communicative competence and the integration of ideological and emotional education, and ultimately to goals centered on international understanding, global awareness, and the development of learning strategies aimed at fostering students' sustainable growth (Wang, 2007). This development

process reflects a progressively scientific and comprehensive national understanding of the nature of the English curriculum and language, transitioning from a subject-centered perspective to a broader consideration of English subjects and students' lifelong learning. This evolution is closely aligned with student-oriented educational philosophies, representing a transformation of the English subject from purely instrumental to humanistic, as well as an integration of both (Wang & Lam, 2009).

However, English curriculum policy still faces several challenges following the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). First, curriculum objectives have been oversimplified and quantified, with each period emphasizing vocabulary volume as a testing standard. This focus can lead to misunderstandings in English language learning, causing both teachers and students to mistakenly believe that expanding vocabulary is the primary goal, which may detract from deeper understanding and practical application. Additionally, while reading competence has received significant attention, learning strategies have often been overlooked. Second, there is a lack of guidance for LPP from a macro perspective (Hou, 1987; Cheng, 2011). Despite changes in curriculum policies across different periods, there is no solid theoretical foundation or realistic framework for language-in-education policy. Kaplan & Baldauf (1997) assert that language education planning is a complex process, crucial for informing curriculum policy. Thus, without scientifically grounded and reasonable foreign language policy guidance, achieving effective results in language education is improbable (Hu, 2009).

2.1.4 English curriculum reform in high school (Cultivation of affect and attitude)

The English curriculum for senior secondary schools has undergone significant reform in the last decade. This reform emphasizes the need to enhance students'

focus on affect and attitude during the teaching process. The latest version of the English Curriculum Standard (2017) confirms that both pre-service and in-service training for teachers must include relevant regulations. In addition to professional knowledge, English teachers are now expected to guide students in employing various learning strategies, with an emphasis on emotional strategies.

Cultivating affect and attitude encompasses not only teaching methods but also teaching content. The objective of affect and attitude was first introduced in the English Curriculum Standard in 2003 (Ministry of Education, 2003), though it received little attention at that time. Subsequent reforms in the English curriculum for compulsory education began to focus more on affect and attitude (Ministry of Education, 2011). The curriculum standards highlight that students' affect and attitudes should be explicitly considered throughout the learning process, as maintaining a positive attitude helps foster positive relationships with teachers. The components of affect and attitude are diverse, encompassing factors that influence learning outcomes and awareness. Krashen's (1983) affective filter hypothesis suggests that while a substantial amount of language input is crucial for learning, emotional factors can exert either a positive or negative influence. Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that students maintain positive attitudes and emotions throughout the learning process. During instruction, teachers should also stimulate students' interests and help them translate that interest into motivation. Cultivating positive emotions can enhance students' understanding of foreign languages and cultures and broaden their international perspectives.

Affect and attitude are significant components of the curriculum objective, encompassing emotion, attitude, and motivation. In language learning, it is vital to stimulate interest, overcome challenges, and celebrate successes. Affect and attitude permeate the entire learning process, although their impact can be

challenging to measure. Therefore, developing these qualities is a long and complex objective. The English Curriculum Standards (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017) specify requirements for affect and attitude at levels 2, 5, and 7, with level 7 applicable to the English Curriculum Standard for senior secondary schools. The objectives for affect and attitude vary across different levels:

- **Level 2:** Students should find English learning engaging and be unafraid of making mistakes. They should actively participate in various learning activities and seek help when facing difficulties.
- **Level 5:** Students are expected to have clear learning objectives and recognize that interaction is central to learning English. They should strive to understand others' emotional expressions and maintain a positive attitude towards different cultures, as this enhances foreign language learning.
- **Level 7:** Students should demonstrate strong motivation for learning English and actively engage in learning activities. They should express their ideas confidently in English, enhancing their emotional understanding through communication. Additionally, they should exhibit cooperative spirits, sharing learning resources and respecting different cultures.

In the context of this study, the terms 'affect' and 'attitude' are used to describe students' emotional and mental reactions when learning English, particularly in the unique sociocultural context in China.

Affect refers to learners' emotional states or feelings about language learning, including anxiety, enjoyment, confidence, depression or motivation (MacIntyre, & Gregersen, 2012). In the Chinese educational setting, high-risk tests and teacher

authority is essential; emotion plays an important role in shaping student engagement in learning English. For example, students' fear of failure or willingness to make family proud may significantly influence their learning behavior and emotional health (Chen et al., 2020).

In contrast, attitude refers to learners' cognitive evaluation or belief about language learning, including perceptions of the application of English, belief about their ability to succeed, and views on the value of English under the national or global background (Wesely, 2012). In China, English is a compulsory course but also a symbol of globalization. Students often hold a contradicted attitude—valuing English for career opportunities while struggling with the pressure of academic performance (Wang, 2015)..

In Chinese culture, affect and attitude closely link to Confucian values such as filial piety, effort-based success, and group harmony (Ge, & Ge, 2020). This means that learning emotion and evaluative reactions are often influenced by external expectations (e.g. parents, teachers, and tests), rather than internal motivation. Recognizing such cultural dynamic is of great significance to interpret students' emotional reactions and behaviors in the context of ELT in China.

In summary, the descriptions of affect and attitude across these levels emphasize the need for language learners to be interested, confident, and persistent in their studies. In language activities, they should actively participate and collaborate with others while understanding and tolerating diverse cultures. Achieving these goals requires teachers to create a harmonious classroom atmosphere and utilize appropriate teaching materials that emphasize both language knowledge and student engagement. The objective of cultivating affect and attitude is to foster students' interest in learning English from primary school onwards. In secondary

school, learners should become proficient in interacting in English and develop an appreciation for both local and foreign cultures.

Developing well-rounded learners involves nurturing their knowledge, emotions, awareness, and behavior. Emotional education is a key component in fostering 'well-rounded individuals.' During English courses, the holistic development of students remains the primary focus. Teachers should balance knowledge acquisition with emotional growth, employing emotional strategies to enhance language learning and teaching. Another crucial factor is establishing a fair and harmonious rapport based on mutual respect and trust between teachers and students. Ultimately, teachers play a vital role in making the teaching and learning process both emotional and educational.

2.2 An overview of secondary educational institutions in China

This section introduces the background and characteristics of China's secondary education institutions, including public schools and private institutions, which are also important scenarios for this study. Meanwhile, it also compares the different advantages and disadvantages of the two mainstream institutions and their future development directions, as well as their impact on China's education.

2.2.1 Nature and background of secondary public schools

The Chinese secondary education system is divided into two stages: junior secondary school and senior secondary school (high school). Junior secondary education is a part of Chinese 9-year compulsory education, including 6-year primary school education and 3-year junior school education. The learning subjects in of junior school education encompass mathematics, English, history, etc. At the end of junior school education, students should attend High School

Entrance Examination to determine whether they are qualified to accept senior school education (Guo, 2014).

Senior secondary education is competitive and non-obligated, and the access depends on the scores of High School Entrance Examination. The curriculum became more specialized, consisted of required subjects: Chinese, mathematics and English alongside with other elective subjects. Chinese high schools focus heavily on preparing students for the Gaokao, the national college entrance exam, which is a determined factor for students to receive higher education. Therefore, students undertake huge pressure in the final years of high school (OCED, 2016). As the research context of this research is relevant to senior secondary education, the following sections mainly outline the key features of high schools.

2.1.1.1 Key features of Chinese public high schools

Several characteristics define the nature of Chinese public high schools. First, exam-oriented education. Chinese public high schools are highly exam oriented. Gaokao (College Entrance Exam) is the core of the educational system, influencing curriculum and teaching approaches. Schools, teachers and students are evaluated based on examination scores, which creates a competitive and stressful environment. Students are faced with huge pressure to obtain a good result in the exam because academic performance plays a pivotal role in their further education and professions. Therefore, rote memorization and strategies for examination are highly emphasized (Li, 2016). Second, the Chinese Ministry of Education dictate a standardized national curriculum to ensure the union of teaching content all over the country. This curriculum involves the core subjects and ideological education. Third, Chinese public high schools have a large class scale with 40-50 students in a classroom. Despite the size, schools often highlight discipline and order, requiring students to obey the rules related to behavior and

academic performance. Teaching approaches are traditionally teacher-centered, focusing on lectures, reviews and self-learning (Guo, 2014). However, recent educational reform begins to encourage interactive and student-centered learning. Forth, urban-rural divide is the most significant gap of the teaching quality. Urban schools, especially in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, are often sufficient funded and have more professional teachers with profound teaching experience. By contrast, rural schools may encounter a lack of resources, modern facilities and qualified teachers (Hannum & Adams, 2009). To address these unequal issues, Chinese government conducted new educational policy to improve rural education, such as providing funds for teacher training. Finally, since Chinese culture puts a premium on education, parents often actively engage in children's education. Many parents pay for private tutorial or 'shadow education' to support children's learning, particularly preparing for GaoKao. Traditional Confucianism remains a strong belief that education is the pathway to achieve mobility, and academic success is often considered as a family responsibility (Schneider, 2019).

2.1.1.2 Reform and challenges

Chinese public schools have experienced several reforms, but still faced challenges. In recent years, Chinese government has proposed many reform measures to reduce the focus on rote memorization and promote a comprehensive and student-centered educational approach. The government also introduces initiatives to encourage the competence of creativity, critical thinking and problem solving. However, the huge pressure from Gaokao and other high-risk exams is still a great problem, which makes students stressful and suffer mental problems (Wang & Bray, 2008). The inequality of urban-rural education is a continuous challenge. Although effort have been taken to improve rural education, it is difficult to overcome the disparity among resources, teacher quality and infrastructures (Liu & Dunne, 2009). Many schools fail to implement

student-centered learning because of the traditional emphasis on exams and high scores.

In conclusion, Chinese public secondary schools are the important component of the national educational system, deeply influenced by history, society and culture. The educational structure of public schools is fiercely competitive and dominated by examination. Although the government attempts to conduct reform to create a more balanced and less stressful learning environment, the inequality of education and exam pressure still have a great impact on the nature of Chinese secondary education.

2.2.2 Nature and background of private tutoring institutions

Private tutoring institutions, often referred to ‘shadow education’, plays a crucial role in Chinese education. Due to the high expectation, competition and cultural emphasis on academic achievement, these institutions have rapidly developed. This blooming increase in this sector is closely related to the evolving social, economic and educational environment in China (Zhang & Bray, 2016). The promotion of compulsory education means that many students are seeking supplementing education, especially in the core subjects, like mathematics and English. These institutions offer a wide range of services from elementary schools to high schools, including subject tutoring, preparation for exams and enrichment programs.

2.2.2.1 The nature of private tutoring institutions

Most private tutoring institutions place emphasis on the core subjects like Chinese, English, mathematics and science since they are essential for Gaokao and other high-risk exams. Parents are willing to invest money on the tutoring

service to improve the opportunity to obtain high scores in Gaokao. Compared to public schools, private tutoring institutions are the profited industry. They charge tuition fees, and there is a huge difference between fees in terms of the reputation and teaching quality of these institutions. Chinese private tutoring institutions provide a series of services, including group class, weekend class and online courses (Zhang, 2021). The rapid development of online education makes it possible for students from remote areas to accept education. In addition to academic tutoring, some institutions also have extracurricular, such as music, arts and physics. However, the focus remains predominant on academic performance. Overtime, the tutoring industry has become more professionalized (Guo et al., 2020).

2.2.2.2 Challenges and criticisms

Despite the popularity of private tutoring institutions, they also obtain concerns and criticisms. The major criticism is that private tutoring intensifies the inequality of education. Rich families can pay expensive tuition fees to receive high-quality education, while lower-income family cannot afford, thereby reinforcing socioeconomic disparity (Zhang & Xie, 2017). Moreover, private tutoring institutions often increase students' pressure in a competitive educational system. Many students need to attend long-term tutoring after class, which may lead to intensive nervousness, anxiety and exhaustion (Bray, 2013). Some professionals criticized that private tutoring institutions makes education commercialized, destroying integrity of the public educational system. Tutoring institutions are profit-driven, which may prioritize revenue over students' well-being and teaching quality. The explosive expansion of private tutoring led to worries about oversight and quality control. Those institutions which did not receive identification cannot provide qualified teaching might raise doubt on the effectiveness of the tutoring industry (Kong, 2017).

Recently, the government has designated policies to regulate the tutoring industry from concerns of students' well-being, financial exploitation and the influence on public education. 'Double reduction' policy (2021) prohibits institutions to offer tutoring of the core subjects, particularly on weekends and public holidays, aiming to relieve students' pressure. These institutions are suggested to become non-profit to offer obligated tutoring. However, this might bring unemployment crisis to relevant practitioners (Zhang, 2019).

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has overviewed the educational, cultural and policy backgrounds that influence ELT in China, particularly in the phase of high schools. By examining the trajectory of language education policy, the curriculum reform, and institutional structures, this chapter highlights how Chinese English language education is intertwined with the national goal, sociopolitical reform, and global influences.

The evolution in the policy of English curriculum—from an emphasis on grammar and lexical acquisition to comprehensive linguistic competence, emotional education and intercultural awareness—reflects how the educational concepts broadly transform from test-based to student-centered. Despite continuous reform promotions, there remains challenges. These challenges involve the dominant position of GaoKao (the entrance examination to college), the disparity between urban and county schools, limitations on student-centered pedagogy, and continuous contradictions between the curriculum goal and classroom realities.

In addition, the emergence of private tutoring institutions as a parallel educational system also reflects that Chinese education encounters socioeconomic pressures and competitiveness. Although these institutions are a supplementary of public-

school education, it also raises some key problems like equality, commercialization and students' well-being. Government efforts such as the "Double Reduction" policy attempt to rebalance the educational landscape, yet their long-term effects require further examination.

Understanding this complex landscape plays a crucial role in interpreting teachers' professional experiences, emotional labor and identity construction, which the study intends to explore. The background outlined in this chapter lays the foundation for examining how emotion, empathy, and professional identity are enacted and negotiated by teachers within the Chinese ELT context.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This chapter reviews research on empathy, emotions, and identity of language teachers, beginning with an overview the development of empathy and debates on its different definitions. By reviewing theoretical approaches to language teacher emotion and identity, I determine the theoretical perspective to investigate empathy. In addition, reviewing empirical studies has provided a guidance to choose the methodology to explore empathy in this study.

It begins with a description of the theoretical perspectives on emotion and a review of prominent theories in empathy and identity, followed by an overview of empathy in language learning and teaching, and the interplay between empathy and professional identity. The chapter involves a review of empirical studies related to empathy and language teachers' professional identities.

3.1 Theoretical perspectives on emotion

This study explores the situations that teachers express empathy and the interplay between empathy and teacher professional identity in the context of language teaching.

While there is rare empirical research on empathy in terms of language teachers, existing empirical research on teacher emotion can provide a meaningful theoretical and practical background (Burke & Stets, 2009; Cross & Hong, 2012; Song, 2016;). In line with the connection between empathy and emotion in positive psychology and drawing on the empirical methods of emotion research (Oxford, 2016), the theoretical perspectives on language teacher empathy will draw on language teacher emotion. By comparing different theoretical

perspectives on language teacher emotions, this study ultimately decided to observe teacher empathy from the perspective of ecological systems theory.

3.1.1 Cognitive (Psychological) Perspective

There has long been an assumption in psychology that emotion is an integral part of cognition (Swan, 2013). Schumann (1997) argues that emotions are foundational to cognition and cannot be separated from it. Aligned with the perspective of emotional intelligence, cognition and emotion are deeply interconnected and mutually influential (Goleman, 1995). Golombek and Doran (2014) emphasize that teachers' cognition and emotion significantly shape their teaching practices. Language teacher cognition is typically understood as "what language teachers think, know, believe, and do" (Borg, 2003, p. 81), yet Golombek and Doran (2014) highlight the absence of attention to how teachers feel about what they think, know, believe, and do—underscoring the importance of teacher emotion.

Historically, cognitive perspectives have dominated applied linguistics research (Swain, 2013; Ross, 2015; Benesch, 2016), and the affective turn emerged from these cognitive approaches. The cognitive perspective typically focuses on the inner world and behaviors of individuals, which in turn directs much of the exploration in psychology (Kanfer, 1990). In second language acquisition (SLA), much of the research has focused on learner psychology, particularly in communicative language teaching (CLT), which promotes learner-centered approaches in the classroom to enhance student learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Randall, 2007). However, teacher psychology has historically been neglected, with little attention given to how it can contribute to teachers thriving in their profession (Castle & Buckler, 2009).

Over the past decade, there has been a growing interest in constructs related to teacher psychology, such as self/identity, beliefs, emotions, and personal traits (e.g., Arnold, 2011; Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Dewaele, 2012). Among these, emotion has taken a central role in recent research, as it is seen as essential for connecting related elements. Golombek and Doran (2014) conceptualize emotion as a functional component of language teachers' cognitive development. Their study employed content and discourse analysis to examine a novice language teacher's diary, confirming the significance of emotional content in shaping cognition. Their analytical framework has offered a valuable paradigm for qualitative research through systematic analysis, though they acknowledged not having refined an exhaustive list of emotions.

Early studies on emotion in language teaching focused primarily on anxiety (Gardner et al., 1990; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991) often neglecting other emotional aspects. During the 'affective turn' in SLA, variables such as anxiety, motivation and self-esteem became prominent. Among these, anxiety was thought to be measured through psychological tools like the foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS). It is found that anxiety negatively correlates with performance and participation in language classrooms (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). In addition to foreign language anxiety, teacher anxiety can also influence their well-being and instructional quality. Kyriacou (2001) argues that stress from performance, workload, and classroom management can raise teacher anxiety. To address it, Oxford (2016) advocates that self-regulation strategies can mitigate anxiety and promote well-being. Dewaele (2017) connected teacher characteristics like enthusiasm and empathy with learner anxiety and enjoyment, highlighting that teachers play a pivotal role in creating an emotional environment of the classroom.

Research on language teacher emotions initially centered on anxiety but has since expanded to encompass a wider range of emotions with more complex research designs and rigorous data collection. Teacher emotions have gained more attention since the introduction of positive psychology into SLA by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000). Investigating the role of emotions in both teachers and learners has become a critical focus of positive psychology.

For instance, Cowie (2011) used phenomenological interviews to gather data from nine English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers at the same university, exploring how teacher emotions influenced their professional lives. The study found that these teachers experienced more positive emotions with their students than negative emotions with colleagues and institutions. Similarly, a study by Dewaele et al. (2017) explored the relationship between foreign language anxiety and enjoyment, focusing on both teacher-related variables and learner internal factors. The findings suggested that foreign language enjoyment was more strongly related to teachers' roles than anxiety, indicating that teachers should focus more on fostering enjoyment in the classroom rather than being overly concerned with anxiety.

One of the key advancements in the study of emotions within positive psychology is the recognition that positive and negative emotions are not mutually exclusive; rather, they coexist and have complementary functions. While the cognitive perspective effectively explains the mechanisms of emotion generation in foreign language teaching, it tends to overemphasize teachers' internal psychological processes and overlooks the influence of social and cultural factors on the generation and expression of emotions.

3.1.2 Sociocultural perspective

In response to criticisms of viewing teacher emotion solely from an individual psychological perspective, sociocultural theory asserts that emotion is not merely an individual, biological phenomenon, but is shaped by the sociocultural context in which it occurs (van Lier, 2004). The context determines when, where, and how people experience and express certain emotions (Kemper et al., 2000). Macro-level factors, such as society and culture, profoundly influence both the experience and expression of emotions and guide micro-level processes like the calibration, management, and interpretation of emotional responses (Yin, 2007). Moreover, individuals are expected to follow social norms when expressing emotions. Vygotsky argued that despite its biological roots, the essence of emotion is inherently social (Fang, 2013). Consequently, emotions are produced within socially intertwined contexts where individuals learn how to appropriately express their emotions in various interpersonal relationships (Turner, 2005). Teachers, for example, must understand the meaning of specific emotions as they relate to different social contexts: anger signifies harm to others, sadness represents a loss, and gratitude reflects relief provided by others' assistance.

Sociocultural researchers often employ qualitative methods, such as case studies and ethnography, to explore how social culture, school management, and professional regulations impact teacher emotions. Hargreaves (2000; 2001) notably proposed a model called "emotional geographies" to explain how sociocultural factors influence teacher emotions. Emotional geography refers to the spatial and experiential patterns of closeness or distance in human relationships that shape our emotional experiences of ourselves, others, and the world around us. Hargreaves' model encompasses five dimensions: sociocultural geographies, moral geographies, professional geographies, political geographies, and physical geographies.

Sociocultural geographies highlight how differences in social class and culture can make it difficult for teachers to understand and connect with others, such as students and parents, often leading to negative emotional experiences. Moral geographies refer to the emotional conflict teachers feel when their moral values are threatened or at odds with others. Professional geographies emphasize the emotional distance teachers may maintain to avoid becoming too emotionally invested, while political geographies focus on how power dynamics and hierarchical structures influence emotional understanding. Physical geographies consider the spatial and temporal distances between individuals, which can also affect emotional expression.

Hargreaves conducted empirical research based on this "emotional geographies" framework, selecting 53 teachers from 15 primary and secondary schools in Canada. These teachers completed questionnaires and reported their positive and negative emotional experiences with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. The findings revealed that in primary education, there was greater emphasis on spatial and professional closeness, which increased emotional intensity among teachers. However, conflicts in the classroom often resulted in more negative emotions. In contrast, secondary education prioritized physical and emotional distance, which sometimes led teachers to suppress emotions during instruction, potentially undermining the emotional engagement necessary for effective teaching.

While Hargreaves' framework provides a valuable tool for analyzing the sociocultural factors that influence teacher emotions, it focuses primarily on external environmental factors, potentially overlooking the role of individual

personal factors in shaping emotional experiences. Thus, it risks swinging to another extreme by underemphasizing personal contributions to emotion.

3.1.3 Post-structural perspective

The post-structural perspective shifts the understanding of teacher emotion from individual and social attributes to cultural and political dimensions, emphasizing the critical function of emotion (Zembylas, 2005). According to this view, teacher emotion is first shaped by the discursive contexts of culture, ideology, and power relationships, making it both an individual and socially constructed phenomenon. Second, emotions are regulated and shaped by power structures and emotional norms. Third, teacher emotion possesses a transformative potential, allowing teachers to navigate these emotional norms with either acceptance or resistance. Through this, they can develop a social identity and a critical awareness of emotional rules, which in turn can influence the broader social context (Zembylas, 2003). This approach connects teacher emotion to a wider framework of social, cultural, and political structures, highlighting that emotions are performative carriers of interaction between teachers and society, imbued with power dynamics.

Compared to cognitive and sociocultural perspectives, post-structuralism presents two distinct characteristics of teacher emotion. First, it underscores the political and performative nature of emotion. Beyond the influence of personal and interpersonal factors, teacher emotions are shaped by power relationships that enforce specific emotional norms, permitting some feelings while suppressing others. Drawing on Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labor, some scholars investigate how teachers manage their emotional expressions to meet institutional expectations. Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006) propose that

emotional labor is particularly essential in teaching since educators need to express care and emotional restraint simultaneously. In this context, teachers are seen as enacting emotions under the influence of power. Second, post-structuralism emphasizes the transformative power of teacher emotion, encouraging a deeper understanding of what teacher emotions signify and their potential impact. For example, Zembylas proposes that emotion can lead to transformative learning, particularly when teachers critically examine the relationship between their own emotional experiences and power, culture and social norms. While power relationships and emotional norms are inescapable, the transformative capacity of emotion enables teachers to challenge, mediate, or resist the discursive practices they encounter, thus altering the relationship between individuals, social interactions, and power dynamics. Teachers can utilize "self-skills" to resist the "power" (Foucault, 1997), critically reflecting on the effects of power by managing their own bodies, minds, and ways of being, or by collaborating with others. Recognizing the impact of power structures allows teachers to resist them, promoting the effective regulation of emotions and encouraging reflection on how emotional norms shape their emotional experiences. Furthermore, it empowers them to explore strategies to break away from current emotional norms, fostering a more supportive emotional environment and allowing for freer emotional expression.

Proponents of the post-structural perspective often use ethnography as a research approach, gathering data through interviews, case studies, and observations to deeply analyze the influence and constraints of power on emotion. For instance, in a study analyzing a primary school teacher's field diary, interview transcripts, and teaching materials, Zembylas (2004) found that emotion serves three functions in schools: evaluative, relational, and political. This study illustrates the complexity and tension inherent in emotions, and more importantly, highlights how power

dynamics within schools' shaping teachers' values, discursive practices, beliefs, and emotional experiences.

In summary, post-structuralism emphasizes the role of power relationships in shaping teacher emotions, while also recognizing the potential of emotion in teacher empowerment and self-development. However, unlike cognitive and sociocultural perspectives, it focuses more on the performative and transformative power of emotion and provides less insight into the internal processes of emotional formation.

3.1.4 Ecological perspective

Unlike the three perspectives previously discussed, the ecological dynamic systems theory transcends the limitations of single factor thinking. It integrates both personal and environmental factors, emphasizing that the interaction between individuals and their ecological environment is the internal mechanism behind teachers' emotional generation (Schutz, 2014; Schutz et al., 2006). This theory is a product of interdisciplinary thinking, combining humanistic thought with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory from social psychology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and dynamic systems theory, which originates in the natural sciences but has been widely applied in linguistics (Dörnyei, 2011; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). The theory primarily explains how teacher emotions form, focusing on the social and historical contexts of emotional episodes (the ecological perspective) and the dynamic interactions in emotion emergence (the dynamic systems perspective).

The ecological system refers to the environments where emotional episodes occur at various levels (Chandler et al., 2011). Schutz (2014), drawing on

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, divides teachers' contexts into five embedded systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem includes the activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships that teachers directly experience, such as teacher-student relationships. The mesosystem encompasses interactions between two or more microsystems, such as the interplay between a teacher's family, work, and social life. The exosystem refers to broader social structures that indirectly influence teachers, such as administrative policies or educational frameworks. The macrosystem represents the overarching cultural and social environments, while the chronosystem accounts for the influence of time, as past experiences shape current and future emotional experiences.

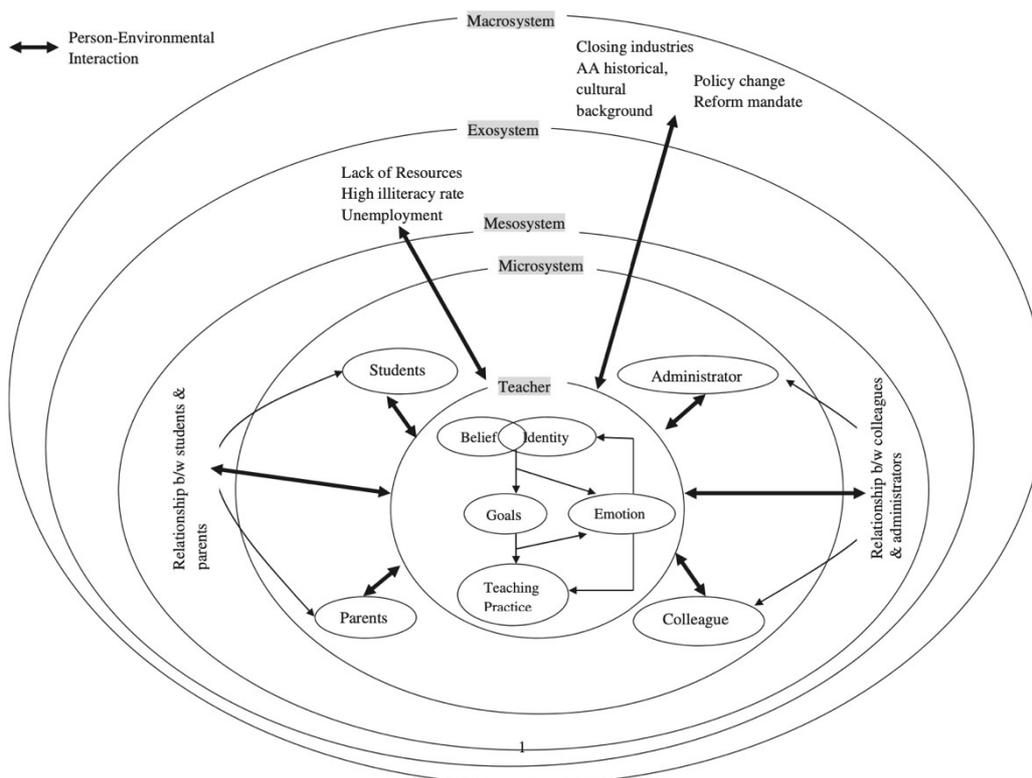
Schutz (2014) highlights the dynamic interplay between emotion and the ecological system. "Dynamics" means that teachers continually assess and evaluate their relationships with their environment and the emotional episodes that arise. This ongoing interaction, combined with personal goals and beliefs, shapes emotional experiences. By using Lazarus's (1991) evaluative model, Schutz (2014) describes teacher emotion as a product of both primary and secondary evaluations, essential steps in emotional formation.

The ecological dynamic systems perspective offers several advantages for studying teacher emotions. First, it clearly explains the process of emotional formation, rooted in teachers' beliefs, goals, and evaluations of their environment. Often, these evaluations are unconscious but critical in generating emotional episodes (Lazarus, 1991). Second, it enriches the understanding of environmental factors at different levels, offering insight into how these factors influence one another. Third, it emphasizes the role of personal factors, particularly teachers' beliefs and goals, in emotional development. By focusing on the interaction

between teachers and their environment, this perspective highlights the dynamic, interactive, and ecological nature of emotion. As a result, researchers often use case studies and narrative inquiries to explore teacher emotions from this viewpoint (Van Veen, 2005; Cross & Hong, 2012).

In one case study, Cross and Hong (2012) explored the emotional experiences of two primary school teachers in the U.S., developing a relational model that illustrates how individual and environmental factors interact to shape teacher emotions (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: ‘Person-environmental’ interaction in the ecological system (Cross and Hong, 2012, p. 959)



In this model, the innermost circle focuses on personal factors, such as teachers' beliefs, identities, goals, and practices. These components are critical to the formation of teacher emotions. Teachers' beliefs—how they perceive themselves, their role, and their environment—are dynamic and change over time and through

social interactions. Identity shapes how teachers see themselves in their professional roles, while goals (both short- and long-term) guide their actions and decisions. These factors mutually influence one another, with beliefs and identity impacting goal setting, which in turn influences teaching practices and emotional experiences.

This model also integrates Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework, showing how personal and environmental factors interact at multiple levels to produce teacher emotions. The interplay between teachers and their environment is central to the emotional experiences they generate.

By comparing theoretical approaches to teacher emotions (see Figure 3.2), this study concludes that the ecological dynamic systems framework offers the most comprehensive model for exploring teacher empathy. Its five systems provide a logical structure for empirical research, allowing for a multidimensional analysis of teachers' emotions across time, space, and context. This framework not only focuses on emotions but also reveals the interaction between emotions and other influencing factors, making it a key theoretical foundation for this research.

Figure 3.2 A comparison between different theoretical approaches to teacher emotions

Perspective	Individual psychology	Sociocultural perspective	Post-structuralism	Ecological dynamic system
Comparison				
Representatives	Sutton & Wheatley (2003)	Hargreaves (2000, 2001)	Zembylas (2005, 2011)	Schutz (2014)
Main point	Emotions are psychological experiences, including evaluation, subjective experiences, physical changes, emotional expression, and behavior tendency.	Sociocultural factors determine the production and expression of teacher emotions.	Teacher emotion is the practice of discourse, the carrier of interaction and performance between teachers and society, and it functions as criticism and transformation.	Emotions are formed by the interaction of teachers' identity, beliefs, goal setting, and the individual's ecological environment at each level.
Emotional characteristics	Private individual	sociocultural	Political performative	Dynamic, systematical interactive
Theoretical orientation	Psychological	Sociological	Critical	Interactive
Research approaches	Quantitative: questionnaires, survey	Qualitative: Case study	Qualitative: ethnography	Qualitative: narrative inquiry, case study

In sum, the ecological theory explains the impact of contexts and multiple-layer factors on teacher emotion and identity, while post-structuralism provides a critical lens to examine how power, discourse and emotional norms shape empathic ‘feeling’ and ‘action’ in the professional context. These frameworks support an exploration of how empathy is experienced, narrated, and constructed in a multicultural and normative environment, thereby offering a holistic and critical approach to this study.

3.2 An Overview of Empathy

Empathy first appeared in the field of aesthetics, which refers to the objects would gain human emotions when observers put their feelings into objects they investigate. This concept acknowledges that people can feel sympathy towards and resonant with the objects. Subsequently, it is also used to explain how people share emotions (Zhu, 2002). This section briefly introduces the aesthetic

background of theories on empathy and how empathy developed into other fields, and finally interprets the meaning of empathy in Chinese language.

3.2.1 History of Empathy

Empathy is a complex and multidimensional conception, experiencing great changes over time, which influences different fields, such as psychology, philosophy and education. The term 'Empathy', derived from a German word '*Einfühlung*' (the predecessor of empathy), was first introduced by Robert Vischer under the aesthetic background. He indicated that people's concerns about the form of nature are unconscious behavior, and they endow their important emotions with natural shapes. This process of emotional endowing is called *Einfühlung* (Jahoda, 2005). Subsequently, Lipps (1897; cited in Montag et al., 2008) used the notion of *Einfühlung* not only to explain how people experience lifeless objects but also how they understand others' mental states. He believed that *Einfühlung* helps people to understand and respond to each other by projection and imitation. Lipps (1903; cited in Wispe, 1987) also adopted a phenomenological method to develop a theory of *Einfühlung* from a psychological and non-metaphysical perspective; thus, empathy realized the transition from aesthetics to psychology. Lipps' work marked the significant change in the notion from 'sympathy' to 'empathy, although the distinction of these terms remains controversial (Pigman, 1995).

Tichener (1909) coined the English word 'empathy' to replace *Einfühlung*. He defined empathy as a process of humanizing objects, to read or feel us into them (Tichener, 1924). This definition emphasizes the reaction and projection of awareness of other persons' feelings and emotions. This view greatly influenced theories of empathy (Downey, 1929; Kohler, 1929) before Mead (1934) distinguished the self and others in the process of empathy. Compared with

empathy in aesthetics, empathy in psychology has become the research object. Rogers (1949,1957) elaborated that empathy can be used as an auxiliary tool by which the counsellor can understand the inner subjective feelings and meanings of the seeker. After Rogers' discussion on empathy, it has not only been an essential concept in psychotherapy and counselling psychology, but also many researchers adopted scientific methods to approach it (e.g., Kohut, 1977).

Empathy also received much attention in other fields of psychology, such as social psychology and developmental psychology. It is considered the determinant, attribution, and social justice of autism (Batson, 1987; Regan & Totten, 1975), an essential index for children's cognitive development (Hoffman, 1987), and an essential factor that influences moral development (Greif & Hogan, 1973). Such a wide range of research interests in empathy indicates that empathy is the foundation of human interaction and the core component of all psychological phenomena. However, the diversity of such interest may lead to a variety of theoretical positions on empathy and inconsistent results that create confusion, although Rogers (1949), Barrett-Lennard (1962) and Kohut (1971) have elaborated on the details of empathy. Apart from an increasing number of studies on empathy in psychology, empathy has been introduced into other research areas like education, sociology, and second language learning.

3.2.2 Debates on Defining and Categorizing Empathy

Although empathy has been discussed for nearly one hundred years by Western research of several disciplines, there is no precise definition of it. There are as many definitions of empathy as there are empathy researchers (De Vignemont & Singer, 2006). Because of the different uses of empathy in different areas, a lack of consistency leads to confusion in conceptualizing empathy. Although it is difficult to ascertain which definition of empathy is correct (Eisenberg, Shea,

Carlo, & Knight, 2014), comparing how empathy is conceptualized and exploring current viewpoints considering the knowledge base is possible. In this study, the researcher was convinced by the definition and relationship between empathy and emotion and intended to investigate empathy through the participants' emotional experiences in their career life.

Empathy is traditionally regarded as individual competence or experience. Empathy encompasses the ability to maintain the distinction between self and other persons and share their feelings. This ability to resonate with others' emotions, whether negative or positive, is important to social interaction and communication. To distinguish empathy and emotional contagion is crucial to understand the role of empathy in human behavior as emotional contagion may raise ones' confusion of self-emotion and others' emotion (Hall et al., 2020). From phenomenology of the first person's perspective, empathic experience can be divided into different components and patterns. This approach provided a subtle understanding of empathy that cannot be captured from research on the third person's perspective (Lumma et al., 2020). However, relational conceptualization assumes it as a dynamic and interactive process, involving both empathizers and empaths. This perspective identified that empathy is a co-creative practice, and essentially directed by others to establish a high-quality relationship (Dijke et al., 2020).

Psychological literature often compares the two conceptions of empathy: whether empathy is a trait or a state (Lennon et al., 1986). According to the conception that 'empathy is trait', it is an inherent ability or tendency that cannot be guided, but can be identified and enhanced (Alligood, 1992). Empathic response is almost automatic and cultural-conditional, not acquired (Kunly & Olson, 2001). Comparatively, Shen (2010) argues that empathy is a fluctuation capacity,

automatically activated by one's perception on others. Therefore, empathy is not characteristic, but contextual because it is often related to a given setting or person (Lennon et al., 1986).

A comprehensive survey on 43 discrete definitions of empathy and eight themes emerged to distinguish 'empathy' from other conceptions, conceptualizing that empathy is a cognitive or emotional nature, congruence, susceptibility to stimuli, self/other distinction, trait or state influences, behavioral outcomes, and automatic versus controlled processes. This analysis emphasized the complexity and changeability of defining empathy, indicating a need to make a consistent and integrating conception (Cuff et al., 2016).

Empathy has three structures, and there might be an overlap between them. Some psychoanalytical theorists regard empathy as a personal trait or an ability through which people can understand another person's inner experience or emotions (e.g., Davis, 1983; Hoffman, 1982; Hogan, 1969). Other theorists consider empathy a cognitive-affective state in a specific context (e.g., Barrett-Lennard, 1962; Hoffman, 1984a). From this viewpoint, empathy is often defined as an alternative reaction that arises from one stimulus to another or perception of others' private world (Baston & Coke, 1981; Katz, 1963). Moreover, some psychological therapists believe that empathy is an experiencing process with multiple stages (e.g., Basch, 1983; Emery, 1987). They are concerned more about the moment-to-moment experience of empathy and explore the process of how empathy is generated and communicated. In a word, when the word 'empathy' is used to represent various structures, there must be confused about its definitions. As Duan and Hill (1996) stated, it is necessary to use a specific word to replace the general conception of empathy, such as 'dispositional empathy', which can help people understand empathy.

The question of whether empathy is cognitive or affective is both the focus of research and the most controversial in the field of psychology. Some researchers deem empathy as an emotional phenomenon, referring to an instantaneous experience of another person (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972), while others argue that empathy is a cognitive experience, an understanding of another person's experience (Barrett-Lenarrd, 1962; Rogers, 1986). As cognition and emotion are intertwined, Gladstein (1983) proposes that empathy contains both emotional and cognitive components. However, Davis (1983) argues that empathy has at least four dimensions: perspective taking, empathic concern, fantasy (imagination?), and personal distress. These four dimensions later have been widely used in the scale to test empathy.

Of the above views, Gladstein's (1983) theory is more influential, which suggests using cognitive empathy to express cognitively take another's perspective and emotional empathy to indicate responses to another one with the same emotion. Based on Gladstein's definition, recent studies on defining empathy have become more nuanced. Howe (2013) adds another component: 'empathic concern, although it is often conceptualized in sympathy or compassion. He also (2013) emphasizes that the critical factor of empathic concern is communication, claiming that empathy requires people to communicate with compassion that we have perceived others' emotional experiences.

Defining empathy remains many challenges since it is often conflated with relevant concepts such as sympathy, compassion and emotional contagion (Decety & Jackson, 2004). Cultural and contextual factors also have an impact on the way to express and perceive empathy (Chopik et al., 2017). Another difficulty

is that the measuring empathy, particularly in qualitative or relational contexts like education (Zhao, 2022).

In sum, empathy is a multidimensional concept, encompassing cognitive understanding and emotional resonance. Although scholars have commonly acknowledged its significance in social and educational contexts, its definition remains blurry and is affected by specific contexts. The nuanced understanding of empathy needs to consider its dynamic, contextual, and socially constructed nature—especially in emotionally intensive profession like teaching.

3.2.3 The distinction between empathy, sympathy and compassion

Although the word ‘empathy’, ‘sympathy’, and ‘compassion’ are often interchanged in daily conversations, they are different emotional responses in concept. In the research of education and psychology, it is essential to clarify these terms because they reflect the different emotional processes and results of interpersonal interactions, including learning and teaching.

Empathy: understanding and sharing emotions

Empathy is broadly defined as the ability to understand and share others’ feelings to some extent. It contains two dimensions: cognitive and emotional (Davis, 1990; Decety & Jackson, 2004). Cognitive empathy refers to the ability to intellectually understand others’ perspectives and emotional states (to consider others in one’s position), while emotional empathy involves emotionally resonating with others or reflecting their feelings. According to Hoffman (2000), empathy is the core mechanism in the moral development and pro-social behavior since it enables individuals to create concerns on others’ feelings through perceiving their

emotional states. During learning and teaching, empathy benefits for promoting classroom interactions and emotional resonance between teachers and students (Cooper, 2011; Yin et al., 2019).

Sympathy: feeling for rather than with

Sympathy is related to empathy, but the difference is that sympathy can feel worried or sad for others rather than sharing their emotional experiences (Eisenberg, 2000; Decety & Cowell, 2014). Sympathy is more objective and evaluative, often involving judgements about other situations. Empathy seeks to be congruent with emotions, while sympathy needs to keep the emotional distance, which may lead to pity rather than mutual understanding. For instance, a teacher may sympathize with a struggled student but may not fully understand the emotional influence brought from challenges, potentially leading to patronizing or superficial responses (Noddings, 2012).

Compassion: empathy in action

Compassion is established on empathy and added a motivational component: the willingness to relieve others' distress (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010). It includes perceiving distress, feeling others' feelings and actively helping them (Glibert, 2009). Empathy may raise emotional resonance, and sympathy may stop at concern, while compassion leads to actions. In the educational setting, compassion is reflected when teachers not only understand and experience students' difficulties but also provide specific support or interventions (Zembylas, 2013).

In the context of teaching, the distinctions are critical. Empathy allows teachers to recognize students' emotional needs, while sympathy may lead to emotional alienation. Compassion emphasizes constructive actions. However, teachers need to keep emotional responses without burnout. It is necessary to find a balance—sometimes called the 'optimal distance' (Cameron & Seu, 2012)—supporting students while protecting their mental health.

3.2.4 Empathy in Chinese language and cultural contexts

Empathy was regarded as a psychological phenomenon or ability that emerged earlier in the theoretical system of Confucianism. The concepts of empathy can be developed in some Confucian thoughts, 'benevolence,' 'compassion', and the principle of '忠(Zhong) and 恕(Shu)'. 'Benevolence' means love, tenderness, and sincerity (Liang, 2011), which is Confucianism's core foundation of empathy. Compassion indicates that people live in harmony with each other, but they may create a kind of emotion like sympathy when they see someone suffering (Dong, 2005). As for the principle of '忠(Zhong) and 恕(Shu)', there is no precise English word equal to its Chinese meaning. The principle of '忠(Zhong) and 恕(Shu) can be explained by a proverb in the Bible, 'do to others as you would have them do to you. From Confucius' perspective, '忠(Zhong)' means that a person who wants to make a difference should help others to make a difference; a person who wants to know everything should make others know everything. '恕(Shu)' refers that you do not impose on others what you do not want. The principle of '忠(Zhong)' is a subjective and positive requirement, indicating that people should take the initiative to consider others and help others.

In contrast, the principle of '恕 (Shu)' requires people to become considerate and understand others (Feng, 2012). These viewpoints are an important manifestation of Confucianism's "temperament theory" or "still sentimental thinking," and just as Qian (2011) argues that Chinese Confucian thoughts have a more critical emotional part than their emphasis on rational thoughts. Confucianism discusses human life, abstinence, widowhood, and even the control of desires. No one should be allowed to be unsympathetic, desperate, or even ruthless. When exploring the meaning of empathy in Confucianism, we discover that some of Confucius's thoughts have provided details of explaining empathy from different perspectives (cognitive and emotional).

In Chinese modern language, empathy is commonly translated as 同理心 (tónglǐxīn), literally meaning 'a heart that understands reason with others'. It underlines emotional resonance and rational understanding—combining feeling and thinking in the interpersonal interaction. Other terms in Chinese include: 共情 (gòngqíng) --emotional resonance and emotion sharing, 设身处地 (shè shēn chǔ dì)—putting oneself in others' place, and 感同身受 (gǎn tóng shēn shòu)—deeply experiencing others' distress as one's own. These expressions reflect the direction of empathy in Chinese culture, which integrates emotional and cognitive dimensions into collective social harmony (Chiu & Hong, 2017).

Research has shown that empathy is often affected by cultural norms such as authority, hierarchy, and social expectations in Chinese classrooms (Gu, 2014). Teachers should care students, but they often achieve this through structural disciplines and academic support rather than open emotional expressions. Chan & Wong (2019) found that in Chinese secondary schools, empathy is mediated by

the academic responsibility and moral concerns. Teachers' care is exhibited in the effort to help students succeed. Similarly, Zhang (2022) investigated those Chinese English teachers expressing empathy through non-verbal cues, behind-the-scenes support and moral guidance rather than published emotional languages. Wang & Ng (2019) indicated that Chinese teachers' empathy is possibly associated with specific contexts. Teachers are more likely to express more emotions in private contexts or when students feel stressful. These studies identified that empathy in Chinese education is deeply contextual, rooted in culture but less valued, reflecting people's preferences to indirect communication and harmony.

However, some scholars argue that the western model of empathy may not holistically capture the way to express and experience empathy in Chinese culture (Wierzbicka, 1999; Wu, 2009). For example, emotional restraint is often seen in communication among Chinese people, which may be misunderstood by westerners as a lack of empathy. Collectivism tends to emphasize group harmony rather than emotional needs in person, which may affect the priority of empathy and its practical ways. In addition, standardized psychological scales developed under the western background cannot accurately reflect Chinese people's understanding of empathy. Therefore, there is need for a more qualitative and narrative research methods (Chen & Xin, 2017).

3.2.5 The process of expressing empathy

Empathy in an individual is provoked by subtle observation or imaging others' emotions. This may trigger observers' reactions to their memories or imaginary, partly feeling others' feelings (Singer & Lamm, 2009). To make proper response, an individual's empathy depends on common understanding of emotions, thoughts

and behaviors, self-awareness, and self-other distinction, and how people's minds operate knowledge (Book, 1988; Pedersen & Pope, 2010).

Expressing empathy is a specific process. Singer and Lamm (2000) described this process as an empathic chain, which begins with active sharing. It is not easy to achieve active sharing and requires encouragement of honesty and openness. Active sharing can facilitate to understand others' feelings, while listening to their views and responding emotionally can help consider problems in different ways. Understanding others will initiate motivations related to the problems, leading to helping behavior. In other words, once a person recognizes another person's emotional reactions or understands his/her perspective, it will raise his/her awareness of providing support and helping relieving distress. As empathy is both an inherent and acquired action, it can increase by purposefully and regularly engaging (Webb, 2014).

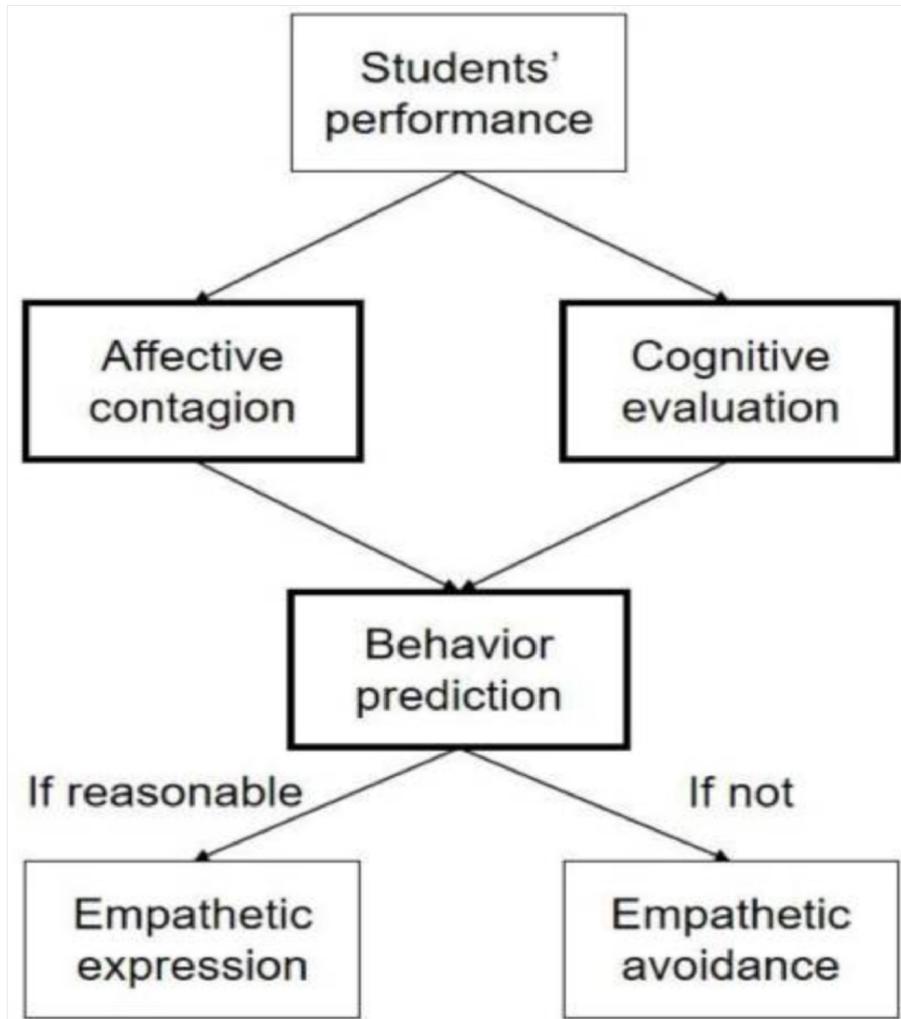
Teaching and learning are highly social. Within the educational environment, teacher-student interaction is one of the most fundamental and necessary formations of interpersonal communication (Moreton et al.,2023). The teacher-student interaction refers to interactions about various formations, features, and degrees between teachers and students (Wilson, 2010). Such interaction cannot only promote cognitive development and social growth of students, but also benefit teacher professional development. The quality of teacher-student interaction depends on their ability to mutually understand intentions and emotions (empathy).

Although recent studies have examined the relationship between empathy and teacher-student interactions, it remains limitations on explaining its potential

mechanism and research approaches. While researchers defined empathy as an ability to understand others' emotional experiences (Coxon, 2003), independent of theory of mind (ToM), others argue that empathy and ToM share a common brain area (Cheng et al. 2007). According to Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2005), empathy is divided into cognitive and emotional components: cognitive empathy refers to understanding the inner states of a target but not sharing them, while emotional empathy describes the ability to indirectly share the inner states.

Traditionally, research on teacher empathy only relied on questionnaires and behavioral experiments. With the use of neuroscience technologies such as electroencephalography (EEG) and functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS), researchers can directly observe brain activities, providing more direct and objective physical evidence (Funane et al., 2011). Based on the mechanism of cognitive neuroscience, Sun et al. (2023) proposed a potential model of empathy in teacher-student interactions (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 A potential model of empathy that integrates the affective contagion, cognitive evaluation, and behavior prediction aspects of teacher–student interactions (Sun et al., 2023, p.767).



This model is consisted of three key components: affective contagion, cognitive evaluation, and behavior prediction. For example, when teachers perceive students’ voices, actions and facial expressions, teachers’ cognitive and emotional system are spontaneously activated. The activation of the mirror neuron system (MNS) in brain enables teachers to experience similar emotions with students, thereby creating empathy (Bernhardt & Singer, 2012). Subsequently, teachers choose to initiate psychological evaluation to predict how their empathic expressions will influence students before displaying empathy. Through

evaluations, teachers may exhibit empathy in a proper situation. Conversely, if they do believe that empathy, they express is not realistic, they may choose not to empathize with students (Cameron et al., 2019).

This ternary empathy model may be influenced by diverse social factors (Miles, et al., 2009). For instance, with the development of teacher professional knowledge, they can better identify students' emotions, thereby creating a more positive learning environment and enhance academic results. Moreover, social factors, such as similarities and familiarities of perception also play a role in this model. However, this model also has limitations. First, it is a hypothetical model, requiring further experiments to verify its science and rationality and improve it. Second, this model only studied the influence of empathy on teacher-student interactions, but not explored the mutual influences between these two factors (Main et al., 2017). Expanding this theoretical model of this bidirectional influence is valuable.

3.3 Empathy in Language Learning and Teaching

Since increasing evidence reveals that teacher emotion has played a crucial role in education over the last two decades, approaches to this research area have been employed from various perspectives (philosophical, psychological, sociological, cultural, and political). The views of teaching influence the interest surge in teacher emotion as 'an emotional practice' (Hargreaves, 1998) and the classroom as 'an emotional place' (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-García, 2014), which underlines the importance of emotion in teachers' professional lives in their working place (Zembylas, 2005; Day & Lee, 2011; Keller et al., 2014). Dewaele (2015) claims that teaching and learning would not take place without emotions arising from classroom interactions and situations. Given this, teacher emotion

has been demonstrated at the epicenter of teaching (Nias, 1996), which contributes actively to the success of learning and teaching. Compared with emotional experience from teachers in other subject disciplines like math and history, examining emotion in second/ foreign language teachers is primarily dominated and challenged because they teach in a language that is not their mother tongue, which may lead to tremendous anxiety and stress (Lee & Lew, 2001). The truth is that teaching is commonly regarded as an emotional rollercoaster with high and low points (Gkonou et al., 2019), and this phenomenon is undeniable in language teaching. Thus, situating emotions in second/ foreign language teacher education has recently gained more attention.

3.3.1 From Learner Emotion to Teacher Emotion

Early research into emotions focused on language learning with an identification that affects play a pivotal role in language acquisition (Scovel, 1978; Lozanov, 1979). A classic model that contributed to the development of emotion in second language acquisition (SLA) came from Krashen (1982), who argued that each language learner has an affective filter. He explained that the language input would be reduced when the filter rose. This is because the language learner gathers an abundance of negative emotions such as anxiety, fear and lack of confidence, and these emotions filtrate most learning content. Based on the hypothesis of 'affective filter', Krashen concluded four main factors that influence the SLA: motivation, attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence. These factors can indirectly influence language learning by preventing input from reaching the equipment of language acquisition in the brain. Precisely, this theory elucidates the success-failure relationship between emotional variables and SLA.

Within Krashen's 'affective filter', language learner anxiety has raised growing interests in SLA. The critical starting point for studying anxiety came from Horwitz

(1986), who conducted empirical research to investigate some uncomfortable feelings of her students, and her discovery encouraged her to set on the path to examine anxiety in foreign language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) developed a *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)* to measure the level of learner anxiety, and the scale was reported with solid reliability and validity. Results presented that FLCAS had modest correlations with communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. A crucial contribution was that Horwitz et al. (1986) provided an empirical method for researchers and teachers to investigate and measure foreign language anxiety. Using items that refer to specific experiences in language situations included in FLCAS, Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) also conducted a study to observe the subtle effects of anxiety on language use. They classified the various sources of effects of foreign language anxiety from three perspectives: academic, cognitive, and social. This classification enables subsequent research to explore foreign language anxiety from specific perspectives with different approaches.

Based on a review of the literature at the time, foreign language anxiety can be summarized as six major causes from three primary sources: the learner, the educator and instructional practice. These causes are 1) interpersonal relationships and personal anxiety, 2) learner beliefs in foreign language learning, 3) classroom procedures, 4) adoption of teacher-centered method, 5) teacher belief in language teaching and 6) language testing (Young, 1991). It can be seen from the sources and causes of foreign language anxiety that teachers are an essential variable that may largely influence learner anxiety. Because of this, researchers began to pay attention to the issue of emotions in second-language teaching. They found that non-native language teachers may experience more anxiety and uneasiness as they teach a language that is not their students' mother tongue. One of the most influential studies was conducted by Horwitz (1996), who developed the *Teacher Foreign Language Anxiety Scale* to test the level of anxiety

and find out reasons for anxiety from teachers. She revealed that non-native teachers had high anxiety during language teaching. Teachers may encounter anxiety because of negative consequences for classroom instruction, such as selecting an appropriate teaching method to reduce communication opportunities.

Following the trajectory of studying learner anxiety, how teachers deal with anxiety has once become mainstream in second/foreign language teaching. The teachers' role in the effect of language learning emerged in research when Krashen (1982) proposed the 'affective filter' hypothesis. He suggested that teachers analyze learners' motivation and motivate them, through which learners can possess a positive attitude. He also emphasized the teacher's role in boosting learners' confidence and lowering their anxiety by creating friendly and harmonious environments and strengthening their self-esteem.

Although it has been proved that the effect in language learning is closely associated with teachers, early research focusing on language teacher emotion was sparse and subsumed under the theme of language teacher anxiety. It was not until the 2000s that language teacher emotions became a focus of investigation from research on emotions and multilingualism (Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002). Extensive research on language anxiety has determined the status of emotions in SLA, which laid a firm foundation for the development of other emotions. A crucial development is that increasing attention has been paid to the field of positive psychology, which mainly focuses on how people thrive and flourish and has been primarily introduced into language learning and teaching (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 2016; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014).

In the field of positive psychology, scholars discussed how teacher positivity influenced language learning, the relationship with learners and classroom climate (Dornyei & Murphey, 2003; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). For example, Arnold (2011) identified that learners' self-image is vulnerable when learning a new language and that it behooves the teacher to ensure a positive emotional atmosphere. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) examined the role of the classroom environment in foreign language anxiety and enjoyment. Dewaele (2014) highlighted that establishing an excellent emotional atmosphere in the classroom relies on teachers and learners because both have a significant impact on the learning and teaching process.

In the recent decade, language teacher emotions have been widely studied with developments in different perspectives, such as cognitive, sociocultural, post structural and ecological (de Dios Martínez Agudo, 2018). In tracing the brief history of emotions in applied linguistics and elaborating on how the research focus shifted from learners to teachers, the goal is to emphasize how the emotions between teachers and learners are closely intertwined as Chen (2016) reminds us that one of the most significant challenges for teachers is that not only to understand their own emotions but also their students.

3.3.2 Empathy in education

In educational settings, empathy is considered a key component of teacher behavior, fostering positive relationships and creating an altruistic and conducive atmosphere for learning. Psychologist Carl Rogers (1969) first emphasized that the teacher-student relationship is grounded in care and understanding (Meyers et al., 2019). He argued that high-quality empathy within this relationship could be the most influential factor in student learning. When teachers understand students' emotional and academic responses and are sensitive to their learning

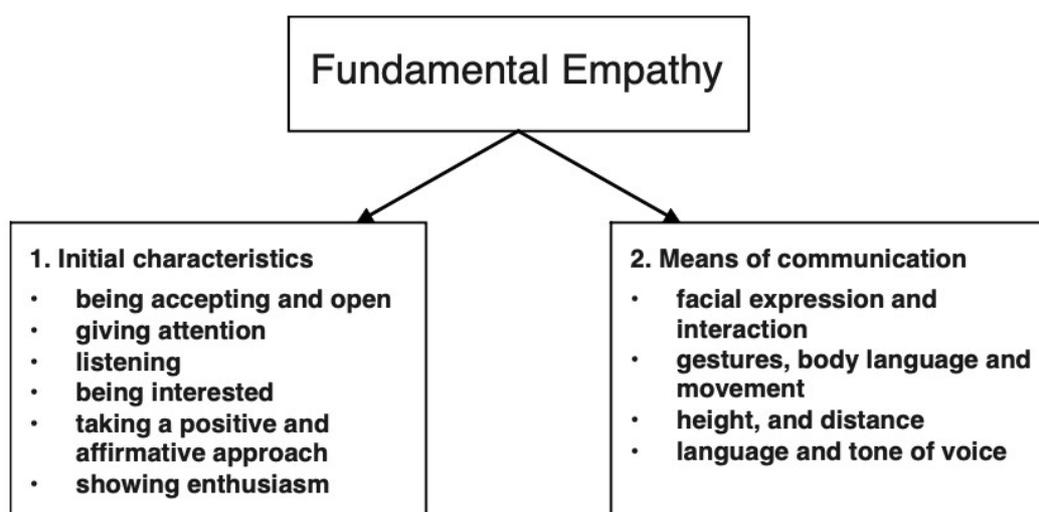
processes, students' educational outcomes can significantly improve. Given the importance of empathy in education, Tettegah and Anderson (2007) explicitly defined teacher empathy as the ability to express care and consider students' perspectives through both conscious and unconscious processes. Peart (1999) echoed this view, stating that teachers who consider problems from the standpoint of students—putting themselves in their shoes—can adjust their teaching strategies to guide students' academic and emotional growth more effectively. Through these empathic responses, teachers can build positive relationships that impact not only students' learning but also their overall development.

The common thread in these definitions of teacher empathy is the emphasis on seeing situations from the student's perspective. Peart (1999) further highlights the importance of adjusting teaching practices through empathy, which plays a crucial role in student development.

Empathy has become increasingly essential in education, academia, and professional environments. For leaders and teachers alike, it is critical to understand, recognize, and empower individuals from diverse backgrounds. Empathy, as a multi-faceted phenomenon, manifests in various contexts and to different degrees, influencing interpersonal relationships, behavior, and learning. Cooper (2011) conducted interviews to explore the characteristics of empathy in teaching and learning. Through grounded theory analysis, she categorized teacher empathy into three new types: (1) fundamental empathy (the basic ability to understand and share the feelings of others); (2) profound empathy (a deep, intense level of understanding and compassion for another's emotional experiences); and (3) functional empathy (the practical application of empathy in different contexts, especially in leadership and group dynamics). All three types are evident in classroom interactions.

Fundamental empathy encompasses initial characteristics and communication strategies, each with subcategories, as shown in the diagram below. Cooper (2011) suggested that establishing empathic relationships begins with fundamental empathy, which can be observed during classroom interactions. This form of empathy is evident when teachers demonstrate openness and acceptance, show concern, listen attentively, maintain interest, adopt a positive attitude, and express enthusiasm to foster active interaction.

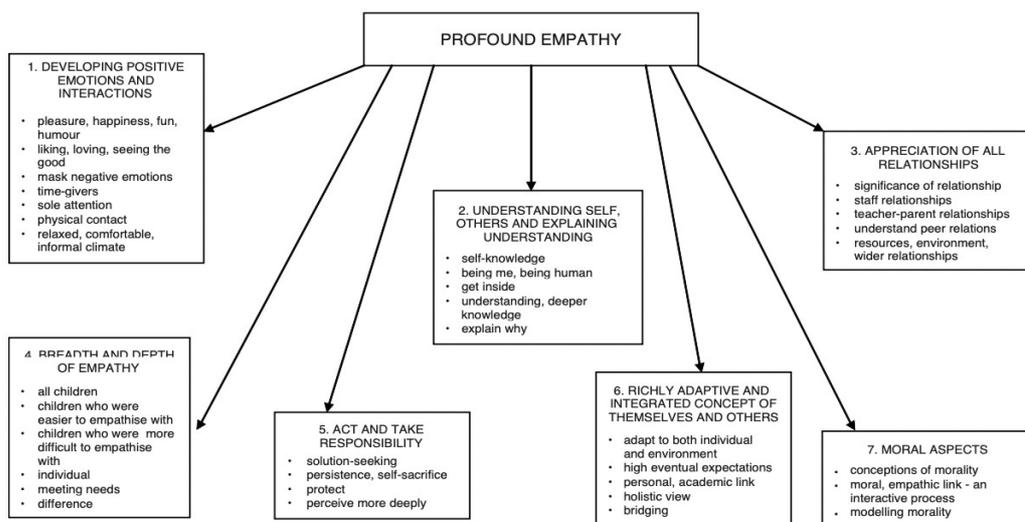
Figure 3.4 Characteristics of fundamental empathy (Cooper, 2011)



Cooper (2011) listed categories of fundamental empathy, which are the necessary features to stimulate empathic relationship. She considered the attitude, ways and means of conveying empathy, such as acceptance, listening and being interested, which is close related to empathic approach in counselling (Rogers 1975,), higher sensitiveness and awareness described by Hay (1997), and the openness described by Waston and Ashton (1995). Hogan (1975) also supports that openness, intuition, and non-verbal clues are the necessity for empathy.

Overtime and with frequent interaction, fundamental empathy can develop into profound empathy, including rich understandings of others' relationship with society, history, and backgrounds. Combined with characteristics of fundamental empathy above, it elucidates the nature of empathic relationship in teaching and learning. When teachers better understand their relationships with students and attend students' inner world from academic and emotional perspectives, they can create rapport and meaningful experiences for students. Profound empathy consists of seven main categories, each of which contains detailed sub-categories (see Figure 3.5) :

Figure 3.5 Characteristics of profound empathy (Cooper, 2011)



As profound empathy develops, it approaches the concept of "full comprehension" (Brown, 1993). Teachers are not only encouraged to model moral behavior in daily life (Koseki & Berghammer, 1992), but also to explain the reasons behind moral actions (Hoffman & Saltzstein, 1967). The richer, leadership-driven aspect of empathy is closely linked to moral and adaptive empathy (Koseki &

Berghammer, 1992). Both fundamental and profound empathy enhance interpersonal relationships, behavior, and learning outcomes.

Functional empathy is the ability to apply elements of both fundamental and profound empathy to engage with an entire group, both mentally and emotionally. By building meaningful relationships with the whole group—particularly in large classes—teachers can foster mutual respect and interaction, adapting to the diverse perspectives and needs of various groups, such as those based on gender and ethnicity.

Despite empathy being recognized as a critical trait for teachers (Noddings, 1988), the current state of teacher empathy is less than ideal. A study in the United States found that school personnel often failed to show empathy toward students who were hurt (Craig, 2000). Empathy is frequently overlooked in practical teaching, especially in higher education (Viadero, 2004). Tettegah and Anderson's (2007) findings suggest that few teachers express empathy toward victimized students in narrative picture stimuli. Miller (2001) measured and compared the empathy levels of pre-service and in-service teachers, finding that experienced in-service teachers were more likely to consider the multidimensional thoughts of students compared to pre-service teachers. Other studies also highlight the personality traits of teachers with varying levels of empathy. For example, research on 24 highly empathetic special education teachers showed that those with higher empathy scores also performed better in teaching, had a strong sense of self-worth and altruism, and found it easier to accept others (Morgan, 1984).

Given the importance of empathy, developing empathic skills in teacher training is crucial. Reflective practices are widely recognized as a fundamental approach for fostering empathy in teacher education. Schon (2008) introduced the concept

of "reflection-in-action" as a tool for professional growth. In the context of empathy, reflective practices help teachers assess their responses and consider ways to better understand students' needs. Gibbs (2006) suggested that keeping educational diaries and engaging in reflective writing allows teachers to process their emotions, experiences, and interactions with students, thereby enhancing emotional sensitivity and empathy. Furthermore, narrative inquiry is another effective strategy for developing empathy. In teacher education, sharing personal stories and analyzing case studies of teacher-student interactions enables preservice teachers to adopt students' perspectives. Rodgers and Scott (2008) noted that listening to students' narratives can foster a deeper connection between teachers and students, thus improving teacher empathy.

Teacher training also benefits teacher well-being, as research suggests that empathy can foster resilience, providing personal support during challenging periods (Fredrickson, 2011; Reivich & Shatté, 2022). Teachers' levels of stress, self-efficacy, and interpersonal relationships with students significantly impact the classroom climate (Virtanen et al., 2017). Jennings and Greenberg (2009) argue that teachers experiencing stress and burnout are less able to express empathy and tolerance for student misbehavior. These teachers are less sensitive to students' needs, which negatively impacts children's well-being (Kokkinos et al., 2005). When this occurs, educators may struggle to maintain harmonious relationships with students, ultimately creating a negative classroom atmosphere (Yoon, 2002).

3.3.3 The implication of empathy in language education

Language learning often provokes students' anxiety when they need to use a new language (Horwitz, 2001). It has been demonstrated that teachers who practice empathy are more capable to recognize and reduce students' language anxiety, creating a safer space for practices and experiments (Dewaele et al., 2019).

Likewise, Horwitz (2010) highlight that language anxiety can impede language learning, but empathic teachers can relieve this anxiety by providing support, encouragement and a non-critical environment. Teacher empathy enables teachers to discover the sign of anxiety and tailor teaching approaches to reduce students' stress. In a qualitative study, language teachers described how they utilized empathy to relieve students' anxiety during oral evaluation. It is reported that the use of verbal and non-verbal clues to express understanding and support can help students express themselves freely with the target language (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014).

In recent years, there has an increasing interest in exploring the role of teacher empathy in fostering learner engagement in English language class. As empathy is regarded as a key element of emotional intelligence, existing references have demonstrated it has a significantly positive correlation with learner engagement. Studies reveal that teacher empathy can facilitate to improve learner confidence and motivation, reduce the level of stress, and eventually increase learner engagement (Aldrup et al., 2021). English language class is the dynamic platform to develop empathy, which can promote universities pay more attention to designate relevant educational content to cultivate students' empathy (Wang et al. 2022).

The subject of teacher empathy and its influence on learner engagement is of great significance in the field of education. Learner engagement refers to the process in which they exhibit psychological devotion and their level of commitment in acquiring, understanding and mastering skills or knowledge emphasized in the courses (Lamborn et al., 1992). Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) claimed that learner engagement depends on teachers, and it is a dynamic construct. They believe that teachers can take important actions to enhance EFL

learner devotion. Therefore, they can express empathy, sympathy, kindness and different supports to improve learners' behavioral and emotional engagement. Another study indicates that teacher support is directly related to academic engagement (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021). They argued that learners who gain empathy and emotional support from teachers usually persist in learning, build confidence and enhance their willingness in the educational environment. Derakhshan (2021) pointed out that empathic teachers enable students to serve as a moral role by helping them to interact with peers. He underlined that such interaction could improve educational quality and learners' positive behavior.

Specifically, empathy plays a critical role in offering constructive feedback in language learning. Empathic feedback not only places emphasis on error correction, but also encourages students, acknowledging their effort and cultivate growing states (Qwai, 2024). In Hyland's (2001) research, the findings showed that empathy can help language teachers construct feedback in a supportive way to motivate students to persist in language learning. Lee (2008) also underlines the significance of empathy in formative assessment in language education. Empathic teachers consider students' emotional reactions to feedback and modify their communicative styles to maintain motivation and prevent frustration.

3.3.4 Emotional Factors Contributing to Teacher Empathy

We generate emotions about various things. Sometimes, we create emotions about what happens to us. These are direct emotions. We also feel emotions on what happens to someone else. These are vicarious emotions. In some vicarious emotional experiences, we can feel the same emotion as the other person feels. These experiences, when we produce emotions on what happens to others, and feel the same as them, is called empathy (Wondra & Ellsworth, 2015). This viewpoint argues that emotion and empathy is inextricable. Emotion is a dynamic

process that manifests in varying levels of complexity in interactions with others. By its very nature, emotion is inseparable from social contexts. Because emotions are directly experienced in our lives, they create a shared subjectivity that links us to others. This connection is facilitated through the embodied presence of others, allowing us to form emotional bonds. Empathy, as the primary means of recognizing the subjective world, goes beyond simple interaction (Hutto & Jurgens, 2020). It is a multidimensional phenomenon that involves emotional and imaginative resonance, shaped by sociocultural backgrounds (Gallagher, 2012). This section will explore key emotional factors that contribute to the development of empathy.

3.3.4.1 Emotional Labor

Emotional labor and empathy are two interrelated notions, which have been extensively examined in various field, such as education and organizational behavior. Emotion labor in teaching is a key research area to explore how teachers manage and express their emotions in the classroom.

Emotional labor theory emphasizes the emotional demands placed on professionals, especially those engaging in nursing and educational roles. Teachers, particularly those who closely cooperate with diverse and vulnerable people, should work on emotional labor—suppressing, managing, and expressing emotions that meet institutions' expectations (Hochschild, 1983). It is consisted of two components: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting focuses on faking or suppressing emotions to conform to job expectations without changing feelings, which may lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout overtime (Humphrey et al., 2008), while deep acting involves genuine effort to feel the emotion when one is required to present, which can bring positive outcome, such as improving job satisfaction and personal achievement (Wharton, 2009).

Empathy plays an essential role in emotional labor. Teachers who demonstrate a high level of empathy can build a rapport with students, creating an effective environment. Since empathy involves understanding and sharing others' feelings, which is closely related to deep acting of emotional labor (Uğurlu et al.,2020). Teachers' beliefs about the importance of caring and empathy in their professional roles significantly affect their practices of emotional labor (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). However, extensive emotion labor can lead to 'empathy burnout', where the demands of empathizing with others become overwhelming. This situation often emerges when professionals feel that they undertake others' emotional burdens but cannot obtain sufficient support and reciprocation, leading to fatigue and disengagement (Gill et al., 2018).

3.3.4.2 Burnout

Burnout, also called job burnout, is a series of negative symptoms manifested by individuals at work due to their long-term inability to cope with occupational stress (Freudenberger, 1974). Maslach and Jackson (1981) divide burnout into three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to a highly exhausting emotional and emotional state due to excessive overdraft of physical and mental resources; depersonalization usually manifests as an individual's indifference, negativity, rejection, and resistance to work; reduced personal accomplishment refers to an individual's negative self-evaluation, feeling helpless and low self-esteem.

Burnout is a state of exhaustion in emotion, attitude and behavior that accompanies an individual's long-term stressful experience (Maslach et al., 2001).

Due to the multiple pressures such as excessive workload, vague roles, role conflicts, lack of social support, class management dilemmas, and interpersonal conflicts with parents and managers, teachers are more likely to feel burnout at work, which is a type of job burnout—high-risk population (Azeem, 2010). For the formation factors of teachers' job burnout, previous studies have mainly discussed external environmental factors such as work pressure, work resources, occupational characteristics, student behavior, social support, salary return, teaching environment, school organizational atmosphere, etc. (Dorman, 2003; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Yue & Ji, 2017). However, as a negative symptom with emotional exhaustion as its prominent manifestation, job burnout is inseparable from teachers' ability to recognize, manage, and regulate emotions.

Qualitative research about empathy and burnout provides a nuanced understanding of how emotional devotion and burnout mutually influence in education, health care and social work. Although quantitative research measures burnout and empathy through scales and surveys, qualitative research focuses on participants' life experience, thereby profoundly understanding factors (emotion, relationship and background) that influence these phenomena. A study related to care workers discovered that empathy is considered as the core of patient nursing, facilitating to build emotional connections between professionals and patients (Sinclair et al., 2017). However, continuous emotional devotion that empathy requires is also described as exhaustion, leading to burnout. Bride (2007) demonstrated that those who constantly offer emotional support to clients experiencing trauma often developed 'empathy fatigue'. This situation overlapped with emotional fatigue, which was directly linked to their high levels of empathy and inability to distance themselves emotionally from clients. Additionally, Schaufeli and Greenglass (2001) interviewed teachers to investigate the influence of burnout on their mental health. They reported that the participants who heavily

suffered burnout cannot build emotional connections with students, thereby leading to a sense of professional inadequacy and failure.

Empathy burnout can produce direct and long-term impact on mental health. The short-term influence includes the increase in the level of stress and anxiety because people need to provide constant support despite of exhaustion. Over time, this situation may raise a feeling of inferiority and failure, leading to depression (Yue et al., 2022). Strategies for mitigating empathy burnout should be employed. First, it is suggested that practicing mindful empathy should recognize ones' own emotional extreme and remain empathy to interact with others. This approach can encourage self-awareness and prevent overextension (Lawlor, 2016). Second, it is pivotal to set emotional boundary to maintain healthy engagement and avoid emotional drowning. This practice allows individuals to provide support while protecting their emotional resources (Harris, 2007). Third, engaging self-caring activities and made coping strategies can enhance emotional resilience, including seeking professional assistance and developing supportive relationships in communities or workplaces (Slatyer et al., 2018). Finally, it is necessary to create a safe environment to recognize risks related to empathy burnout. Organizations should offer emotional regulation training to ensure staff access resources of mental health (Williams et al., 2017).

Emotional labor in teaching involves emotion management to meet the emotional demand in the workplace (Wang et al., 2019). Teachers often engage in deep acting. They internalize emotions they want to act on surface. They fake emotions to fulfill professional expectations (Horner et al., 2020). The performance of emotional labor relates to both positive and negative results. For example, it can lead to increased job satisfaction and commitment, it can also result in dissonance and burnout (Tsang, 2011).

In education context, teachers often engage in emotional labor by both expressing empathy to students and managing their emotion. Research indicates that superficial acting and deep acting have an impact on emotional exhaustion. Specifically, deep acting is considered as a mediating factor between teacher empathy and burnout (Frenzel et al., 2021). Although empathy can improve teaching effectiveness, it also requires effective emotional regulation to prevent burnout.

Teachers' emotional regulation involves the intensity and duration of time to change emotions to reach the expected results in the classroom. Teachers frequently regulate their emotions to enhance effectiveness in classroom management, discipline, and teacher-student relationships (Sutton et al., 2009). They employed various strategies, including preventing and reactive approaches to manage emotions (Taxer & Gross, 2018). Negative emotional induction can exacerbate burnout while positive induction may facilitate to reduce these influences. Therefore, effective emotional regulation plays a pivotal role in maintaining teacher well-being while fulfilling the empathic demands of their roles (Stevens & Lane, 2001).

The relationship between emotional regulation and empathy in teachers is complex and independent. Teachers' ability to emotional regulation and empathy are closely linked. For example, teachers' self-efficacy in emotional regulation contributes to their empathy, indicating that those who can well manage their emotion are more likely to display emotional behavior (Hen & Goroshit, 2016). In addition, training on emotional intelligence of teachers can enhance their emotional regulation and empathy, further underlining the interconnection of these abilities (Hen & Sharabi-Nov, 2014).

3.3.4.3 Autonomy

Language learning and teaching, in essence, is a process of relationship and emotion (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017), requiring teachers to carefully consider how their emotions influence their behavior, belief and social relationships. Murphey et al. (2010) believe that emotional belonging precedes learning; therefore, to achieve learning success, it is vital to create a safe environment for teachers and students to express their feelings and establish a positive social relationship. Arguably, it might be a situation to conduct autonomy. Specifically, in language teacher education, this involves reflections on empathy, fostering teachers' ability of active listening, making them favored among students and putting themselves in their shoes (Mercer, 2016).

Teacher autonomy refers to the degree that teachers can control teaching decisions and classroom management, including the curriculum design, choices of teaching approaches, evaluation strategies and the classroom environment. This conception underlines the importance of adjusting teaching approaches according to educators' understanding of students' needs and the learning setting (Stefanou et al., 2004). It has been proved that autonomy-supportive teaching can enhance pre-service teachers' cognitive and emotional ability since it focuses on developing a sense of relevance by providing students with choices of school assignments. A study related to education of values and knowledge reported that enhancing autonomy-supportive teaching can significantly increase empathy and cognitive complexity of pre-service teachers (Weinberger, 2017). This approach enables teachers to better understand and resolve students' different needs, creating an empathic and supportive learning environment.

Furthermore, qualitative studies investigate the function of reflection in building empathy through autonomy. Teachers who harbor autonomy often conduct the reflective practice, which can enhance their empathy. Reflective autonomy allows teachers to critically consider students' emotional and learning needs, thereby create empathic teaching practices (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Benson (2001) showed that teachers who have autonomy of reflection in teaching approaches are more likely to empathize with students. This empathy derived from their deep understanding of the process of students' learning and individual effort. Another qualitative study underscored that pre-service teachers who engage in the reflective practice are more aware of the importance of empathy in fostering learner autonomy. This awareness not only improves their teaching practices, but also helps them create more meaningful and personalized learning experiences for students (Borges & Castro, 2022).

It is also indicated that autonomy is a pathway of emotional engagement. Teachers who have a high level of autonomy may devote more emotions in their work, thereby enhancing their empathy. When they are free to design and implement teaching strategies, they can be more flexible to cope with students' emotional and academic demands. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) employed case studies to investigate language teachers who have autonomy in curriculum design. These teachers stated that they felt more capable to understand students' motivation and challenges and used empathy as a tool to adjust their teaching. However, a lack of autonomy can lead to burnout, negatively affecting teachers' ability to empathize with students. Rigid curricula, policy and an excess of administrative duties make teachers feel burnout, reducing their competence to generate empathy (Oberle, et al. ,2020). In interviewing teachers, Skaalvik and Skaalvic (2014) discovered that a lower level of autonomy is associated with a higher level of stress, leading to a decrease in empathy. Teachers who suffered burnout

showed that they felt emotionally disconnected with students because their emotional energy was consumed by administrative pressure.

3.3.4.3 Belief

Although there are no specific studies on empathy from the emotional perspective, it can only be found with other emotional variables in current research. The development of positive psychology raised a blooming interest in positive emotions, and people have become increasingly concerned about mental health. Neimeyer (1995) argues that conflicts between persons have significantly increased due to stress. Failure to overcome these conflicts may bring physical and mental damage.

Teacher belief refers to educators' conscious and unconscious hypothesis toward teaching and different aspects of learning, including attitudes, values, assumptions, and individual teaching styles. These beliefs determine how educators deal with their work and interact with students (Ferguson & Lunn, 2021). Teacher beliefs can be classified into different types: belief about students (students' competence, learning styles, and potential of growth), beliefs about learning (how learning happens, what effective teaching is, and the function of evaluation in education,) and beliefs about teaching (professional responsibilities, effectiveness of different teaching approaches, and professional identity) (Gilakjani & Sabouri,, 2017).

Teacher belief has a great impact on teaching practice, such as curriculum design, classroom management and teaching strategies. Instructors often filter information through their current belief system, which may promote or impede the adoption of innovative practice. Also, teachers' perspectives on students can directly affect their interactive means. For example, those who acknowledge students' potential are more likely to establish a positive relationship and create

an attractive learning environment (Ge et al., 2021). However, when teachers hold conflicting beliefs, they may experience cognitive dissonance. This tension may have a negative impact on their classroom practice and holistic effectiveness (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017).

Empathy is not automatic, but related to the environment (Zaki, 2014). Like many psychological phenomena, empathy also includes the motivated component (Weisz et al., 2020). Empathic motivation is targeted, an inner power that drives people to withdraw from social relations (Weisz & Zaki, 2018). More importantly, Keyesers & Gazzola (2014) pointed out that the distinction between competence and tendency is crucial to portray empathy. Regarding this theory, empathy might differ in terms of ability and motivation.

Identifying factors that influence teacher empathy based on motivation is a novel approach. Belief is one of the most significant factors that influence motivation, such as theories of successful goals (Dweck, 1996). In recent years, an increasing number of researchers have paid more attention to belief and made huge progress since it plays a key role in empathy and empathic motivation (Weisz et al., 2020; Gandhi, et al. 2021). For example, Weisz et al, (2014) discovered that interviewees who had a firm belief about empathic plasticity exhibited higher empathic motivation and accuracy. Likewise, Gandhi et al., (2021) reported that individuals who believed empathy was changeable expressed more empathic behavior (less aggression).

The relationship between teacher belief and empathy is critical since it may influence interaction between educators and the whole classroom environment (Xu, 2012). Teacher belief in student potential plays a pivotal role in shaping their

empathy. For example, educators who harbor a mind of growth (the belief in students' ability to develop by themselves) are more likely display a higher level of empathy and empathic motivation. Conversely, those who maintain a stable mindset believe that students' learning competence is static, which may restrict their empathic engagement in students with academic difficulties and have a negative impact on students' positivity (Mangels, 2006).

Furthermore, teachers' beliefs about the role of emotion in learning significantly influence their empathic practices. Teachers who realize the importance of emotion in the learning process are more likely to sympathize students' emotional needs, understanding students' emotional state can affect their engagement, behavior, and academic performance (Çelikkaleli & Ökmen, 2021). A study discovered that those teachers who regarded emotion as an integral part of learning had more empathic responses to students' social and emotional needs, which produces a positive impact on student engagement and scores (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). However, Hargreaves (1998) argued that teachers who ignored the emotional disturbance of students were less likely to raise empathy with students.

3.4 An Overview of Language Teacher Professional Identity and empathy

Language teacher professional identity is a multifaceted structure, influenced by a variety of factors, including emotion and empathy. Understanding how empathy shapes language teacher professional identity is of great significance to enhance teaching practices and fostering positive educational settings. This section will begin with a review of the definition of identity, extending to teacher identity and professional identity. Followed by an explanation and evaluation of theories about language teacher professional identify, this study highlights influential factors of

language teacher identity. Finally, empirical studies relevant to the interplay between empathy and identity will be discussed to identify the research gap about current studies.

3.4.1 What is 'Identity'?

The word 'identity' contains abundant connotations. It not only has the meaning of 'the same' but also the meaning of 'belongingness' and 'identification' (Woodward, 2018). According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 'identity' refers to 1) The identity that exists in traits and attributes in different contexts or the identity of individuals or things wherever and whenever they are; 2) A distinguishing feature of an individual or thing itself or a relationship established by psychological identity. This definition emphasizes that 'identity' is not only individual characteristics and features but also the identity of the relationship between individuals and groups.

As identity involves diverse research fields, scholars give it a variety of definitions. Famous psychologists W. James and S. Freud were the first to put forward the concept of 'identity' (Zhang, 2013). They believed that identity is the behavior and attitude that individuals and groups imitate and the process of becoming a part of individual psychology. Given this, Erikson (1968) developed the conception of identity. He indicated that 'identity' is the identification of one's role and status and the perception of 'who I am and 'what my identity is'. He also highlighted the sociality of identity, stating that people's identity is closely linked to the community in which they live and their identifications with the outside world. However, Erikson's identity has been criticized for overemphasizing a single individual's role in identity formation and ignoring the influence of sociocultural factors.

Sociologists argue that identity is the interaction between individuals and society. Mead (1934, cited in Schwartz, 2001) deems that identity is the process of individuals' socialization in which individuals adapt to society by constantly identifying and assimilating social regulations and mediating personal behaviour. Jenkins (1996) adds that identity includes two dimensions: individual identity and group identity, a process rather than a product. Individual identity refers to the personal perception of one's living conditions, social expectations, job status, previous experiences, and current context (Day et al., 2006). In other words, it is a sense of pursuing the unity and continuity of the self, which mirrors the selfreflection, identification, and exploration of the subject. Social identity refers to the sense of belonging and values that individuals create from the group they belong to (Ngoc, 1998), a self-conception of a group member. This conception elucidates that identity is more likely a role allocated by society. Although the focus on defining identity is different, it can be found that identity is a dynamic and developing process with figurability and sociality. To some extent, identity is how individuals identify and recognize their status, images, and societal roles (Xun, 2012).

3.4.2 Teacher professional identity

Beijaard (1995) divided teacher professional identity into three dimensions: the subjects teachers teach, the relationship with students, and teachers' roles. Subsequently, Baijaard et al. (2000) added that teacher professional identity originated from a comprehensive perception of three identities: 1) the way teachers regard themselves as a subject matter expert, through which subject matter subjects believe that knowledge and skill of the subject is the foundation of teacher professions; 2) pedagogical experts, who are required to support students and society, develop emotions and knowledge of morality; 3) didactical

experts, who should design teaching plans and conduct and evaluate the learning and teaching process.

Sachs (2005) highlights that teacher professional identity is the core of teaching professions, which provides a new research perspective to study 'how to become a teacher' and 'how to engage and understand the teachers' career and their social status'. Teachers' professional identity is associated with teachers' selfconcept and self-image (Nias, 1989; Know, 1992). These concepts and images determine the teaching patterns, modes teacher development, and teachers' attitudes towards educational reform. Teacher professional identity emphasizes teachers' roles (Goodson & Cole, 1994) and the significance of reflections and self-evaluation in teacher development (Cooper & Olson, 2020), which is influenced by the expectation from society and the self-recognition of teacher themselves (Tickle, 2000).

3.4.3 Concepts of language teacher identity

Research on teacher identity began in the 1980s and has gradually gained prominence. Educational researchers approach the study of teacher identity from various perspectives, focusing on different aims. Given teachers' multifaceted roles in society, scholars recognize that teachers hold multiple identities, including professional identity, cultural identity, personal identity, and role identity (Beijaard et al., 2004). While many studies primarily concentrate on teacher professional identity and teacher identity, most fail to distinguish between these concepts (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Izadinia, 2013). Additionally, some researchers explore teacher identity by examining other dimensions of teachers' inner worlds, such as emotion, practical knowledge, and a sense of responsibility (Craig, 1978; Lasky, 2005; Teng, 2017). With the advancement of educational reforms in various countries, there has been growing interest in how teacher

identity develops during periods of innovation (Chee et al., 2015; Schutz et al., 2018). The power dynamics and multiple perspectives within teacher identity have garnered significant attention.

Recently, the constructivist view of identity has dominated the field, with many researchers emphasizing the complexity and social nature of teacher professional identity (Ezer et al., 2010; Ross, 2005). For instance, Beijaard et al. (2000) define identity as a combination of self-perception ("who I am"), the meaning one assigns to oneself, and the meaning attributed by others. Their perspective encompasses three core elements: the subjects teachers teach, the teacher-student relationship, and teachers' roles and role concepts. Connelly and Clandinin (1995) liken identity to "the stories we live out in the vast, complex, and dynamic 'personal knowledge landscape.'" This metaphor highlights the interaction between individuals and society, as well as the influence of time and space. These definitions of professional identity incorporate teachers' selfunderstanding and their relationships with those around them, the subjects they teach, and the broader social environment. A constructivist approach places emphasis on the dynamic, diverse, and interactive nature of professional identity in relation to social structures.

3.4.4 Theories of language teacher identity

Influenced by a surge in exploring teacher identity, English language teacher identity has been continuously developed since the beginning of the 2000s. According to Palmer (1998), English language teacher identity is consisted of the English subject, students, and teachers. The identification of teacher identity, therefore, is the interplay between teaching, teachers' experiences, and the sociocultural and educational environment. Subsequent studies on language

teacher identity have become more subtle and can be divided into several categories:

‘Instrument theory’ (Gee, 2000; Norton, 2000; Morgan, 2004) believes that professional identity is shaped by the roles teachers undertake and expectation of these roles. Teachers construct their identities in terms of teaching practices, interaction with colleagues and parents, and educational backgrounds. This theory underscores the function of identity and how teachers harness their professional environment to effectively perform their duties.

‘Construction theory’ (Pennycook, 2001; Johnson, 2003; Beijaard et al., 2004; Varghese et al., 2005) reflects people's understanding of the process of formatting teacher identity, believing that the formation of teacher identity is 'becoming' (a dynamic process) rather than 'being' (a static state).

‘Role theory’ (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Richards, 2008; Varghese, 2006; Farrell, 2011) posits individuals develop their identities by interaction with a variety of social roles. Each role has specific expectation, behavior and norm, which can influence how individuals see themselves and behavior under different circumstances. This theory highlights the dynamic feature of identity, indicating it is influenced by individual behavior and social structures. ‘Role theory’ demonstrates the close relationship between teacher identity and teachers' roles, embodying the different social functions teachers undertake. From this perspective, Richards (2008) states that English language teacher identity is the social and cultural roles that English teachers play when interacting with their peers and students. In terms of different tasks in the working place, English teachers should undertake multiple roles, such as a teaching manager, a professional teacher, and a cultural

transplant. Such roles are all components of English teacher identity (Farrell, 2011).

The role theory will guide this study to investigate how the participant teachers define themselves by understanding the various roles they acted in the professional setting. Farrell (2011) argues that the role theory provides a useful framework to understand how teachers construct and reconstruct their professional identities. Teachers' roles of identity include their emotions, values, and beliefs about different aspects in teaching. The reflection practice has been identified as a key approach to explore and improve teachers' roles. Additionally, teacher empathy also plays a significant role in teacher identity. Educators who have a strong identity with students' experiences are more likely to engage empathically, which can enhance their effectiveness as teachers (Warren, 2018).

Following definitions of English language teacher identity, the teacher's role and identity and self are intertwined. As the concepts 'self' and 'identity' may be used throughout the study, it is necessary to elaborate on them. The so-called 'role' is the role played by participants in communicative activities (Richard, 2001). Differences in roles indicate differences in the scope, importance, and influence of responsibilities, reflecting people's expectations for special social status and specification. The teachers' roles will be different in different teaching contexts. In addition to assuming teaching responsibilities, the role of a teacher will also vary due to the characteristics of the school, the management structure of the teaching institution, the differences in educational ideas and goals, the teaching methods, and cultural background.

The conceptions of identity were often intangibly depicted as 'self' and 'self-concept' in early literature (e.g., Erikson, 1968). Brown (2004) argues that the self

is how people think about themselves. The sense of 'self' mainly contains ability, agency, solidarity, and morality. Brown explains that people will develop an idea about what we are like: self-evaluation. Through self-evaluation, one's identity is constantly prefabricated, formed, and re-formed as the individual develops and interacts with others. His research also shows that many people are not entirely accurate in judging themselves when they evaluate some excellent qualities and abilities (kindness, attractiveness, and intelligence). Their self-evaluation is usually higher than actual evaluation, but self-evaluation is often related to evaluation from others.

In addition, van Lier (2004) distinguishes the self and identity, indicating that the self is about a personal history as a feature of group members and individuals, while identity mirrors a person's social position and distinct behavior. Indeed, as a social member, one's identity can become a part of the group identity and undertake multiple identities endowed with society, politics, and public groups. Identity, to some extent, controls one's self-concept. Identity and the self are mutually reflexed when interacting with communities, institutions, and some political contexts.

Current research concludes that English language teacher identity has the following characteristics: identity is not a person's fixed attitude but a changing attitude with relativity, and it is a place of 'struggle' (Peirce, 1995). Identity is fluid, dynamic, contradictor, changing and contingent. Identity can reflex various social and interpersonal relationships through social negotiation and construction (Varghese et al., 2005; Yang & Bautista, 2008; Morgan, 2010). Teacher identity might be challenged and influenced in constant changing contexts. An identity crisis would emerge with the development of identity (Meijer, 2011). In other words, individuals may lose their sense of identity under threat. When English teachers

stay in this state, they will lack an explicit identification of themselves, which leads them to be confused about making decisions (Luo, 1991). Van Lier (2004) discovered that English teachers experienced a conflict between self-identity and social identity when they taught English in the context that Chinese is the native language. However, an identity crisis can become the motive of the change in teacher identity; hence, the crisis is also an opportunity (Bolivar & Domingo, 2006).

3.4.5 Factors that influence professional identity

3.4.4.1 Emotional development teacher professional identity

Recently, the role of emotion in teaching has garnered increasing interest, particularly regarding the interplay between emotion and teacher identity. Identity theory provides a framework for understanding the construction of emotions. According to this theory, the 'self' comprises a structure of multiple identities (Burke & Stets, 2009). Identities are defined as self-meanings, a set of meanings that individuals hold as their definitions of who they are (Burke, 2004). This theory posits that a person can possess multiple identities, such as those of a teacher, father, or partner, which are organized hierarchically. In specific circumstances, one identity may become more prominent than others (Stryker, 2008). For example, when interacting with students in the classroom, an individual may primarily identify as a teacher, whereas at home, they may see themselves as a father. The dominant identity acts as an indicator that shapes one's self-perception and guides behavior (Burke & Stets, 2009). When teacher identity is more salient than other identities in the classroom, the individual is likely to focus on facilitating students' learning and growth (O'Connor, 2008; Wilson & Deney, 2010). In essence, individuals strive to validate their distinct identities by monitoring their actions in specific situations (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Positive emotions arise when their actions affirm their identity; conversely, negative

emotions may surface when they do not (Burke & Stets, 2009). Furthermore, identity theory suggests that emotion is not only a consequence of identity validation but also a crucial factor in identity construction and reconstruction (Stryker, 2004).

Based on this theoretical foundation, many scholars have conducted empirical studies exploring the relationship between teacher emotion and identity (e.g., Hargreaves, 1998; Van Veen & Slegers, 2005; Song, 2016; Wolff & De Costa, 2017). For instance, Hargreaves (1998) interviewed 32 teachers from four secondary schools in Canada to explore their experiences during educational change. The findings indicate that the relationship between teachers and students significantly influences teachers' emotions. Teaching pressures can affect teachers' professional lives and identities, as reflected in their emotions and attitudes toward students. Similarly, Van Veen and Slegers (2005) investigated identity changes within the context of educational reform by analyzing the emotions of secondary teachers in the Netherlands. The researchers reported that participants initially felt enthusiastic about the reform; however, due to a lack of support from colleagues, school administrators, and the government, as well as overwhelming workloads, many negative emotions emerged, including anger, guilt, and anxiety. While this study primarily focused on individual factors, it overlooked the impact of environmental factors on teacher identity. Subsequently, in a follow-up study, Van Veen and Slegers (2006) expanded their sample to include six teachers from a secondary school in the Netherlands to examine their emotional experiences during the reform process through a social-cognitive lens. The research revealed that teachers' perceptions of teaching are central to their professional identity. When teachers' professional orientations align with educational reforms, they experience positive emotions, thereby enhancing their professional identities. Conversely, when reforms threaten their identity, negative emotions arise. The stability of individual and professional identities is often

maintained through navigating 'the self in different contexts at different times in various ways.' Teachers' responses to educational reforms are largely influenced by whether their professional identities are reinforced or challenged. Consequently, educational reforms have become a popular context for examining the impact of teacher emotions on teacher identity, as teacher emotions frequently fluctuate in such dynamic environments. Whether a reform enhances or undermines professional identity depends on how teachers perceive it.

Emotional conflicts also play a significant role in the development of teacher identity (Wolff & De Costa, 2017). For instance, Song (2016) explored how the changing teaching context due to globalization generates new demands for teachers and how their emotional responses to these shifts affect their identities and practices. Through interviews with five Korean English teachers from a secondary school, the study highlighted the teachers' conflicting experiences regarding overseas students, revealing the discrepancies between their outward behaviors and internal emotions. The findings underscored a critical aspect often overlooked in discussions of language teacher identity: the influence of emotions on the construction and presentation of their identities in classroom practice. Wolff and De Costa (2017) further emphasize the reciprocal relationship between teacher emotion and teacher identity. By examining how identity conflicts affect teachers' emotional evaluations and behavioral reflections, van de Wal, Oolbekkink-Marchand, Schaap, and Meijer (2019) identified three levels of emotional evaluation: low (no impact or immediate impact), intermediate (impact lasting several days), and high (long-term negative effects on work and daily life, leading to self-doubt). Behavioral reflections manifest as various forms of response, including reflection, help-seeking, and direct action. The existing research indicates that studies on teachers' identities and emotional changes have become mainstream; however, most focus on the negative emotions associated with reform while giving less attention to the positive emotions

experienced by teachers. Given the rise of positive psychology, it is essential to also explore teachers' positive emotions, as educational reforms can foster and enhance the development of their identities.

In China, most studies apply sociocultural theory to examine how external factors, such as culture, influence teacher identity, while neglecting internal factors like emotion from a micro perspective. Nonetheless, there is some empirical research that emphasizes the significance of emotion in shaping teacher identities (Gao, 2008; Song, 2016). For example, Tang (2014) investigated the relationship between teacher professional identity, job burnout, and teaching efficacy through questionnaires administered to 347 middle school English teachers. The findings indicated that middle school English teachers possess a high level of professional identity, experience moderate job burnout, and report higher personal teaching efficacy than general teaching efficacy. Moreover, it was found that a teacher's professional identity positively influences their teaching efficacy. Similarly, Liu (2014) employed the same methods to explore college English teachers' identities and found a positive correlation between teacher identity and attitudes toward professional development. Additionally, teacher identity is influenced by factors such as teacher effort, learning culture, organizational management, and the social context of language teaching.

Kuang (2014) analyzed college English teacher identity from a philosophical perspective, examining the relationship between identity dilemmas (the teacher as self and students as others), the educational social system, and Western culture. The research revealed three types of relationships that exist between teachers and their students as others: the relationship of need and being needed, the responsible relationship, and the relationship of equal dialogue. According to structural theory, the self-identity reconstruction of college English teachers can

only be achieved by reaching a consensus on values between the self and the social systems of others. As English teachers navigate two different cultures, they must adopt a positive attitude toward other cultures, which can help them achieve a sense of belonging and complete their self-identity construction within multiple systems.

Dou (2011) conducted a case study to explore the process of professional identity construction through the experiences of a novice English teacher during the first two years of teaching. The findings demonstrated that the professional identity of new English teachers evolved from initial uncertainty to greater confidence, influenced by various factors, including teacher-student relationships, relationships with colleagues, working environments, teaching activities, and teacher reflections. Furthermore, Xun, Sun, and Peng (2014) developed a scale for Chinese foreign language teachers' identities, categorizing teacher identity into four dimensions: occupational identity, professional identity, personal identity, and situational identity. This scale includes eight variables to investigate these identities: professional values, professional belonging, belief in English teaching, English language proficiency, job engagement, professional behavior, perceived organizational support, and foreign language teaching reform.

In summary, while existing research on teachers' emotions and professional identity in China predominantly employs quantitative methods to assess the influence of various factors, including emotional factors, emotional considerations as a separate area of research in the development of teachers' identities remain relatively underexplored. Additionally, qualitative research on this topic is scarce in the Chinese context.

3.4.4.2 Reflection

Reflection is a crucial factor for teachers in achieving a sense of self-identification and deepening their understanding of how to adapt to the social environment. Consequently, reflection is an essential component of professional teacher behavior (Reiman, 1999) and holds significant importance for teacher development. While teacher reflection can be instrumental, its essence is inherently moral (Oser, 1994). Reflective practice may focus on specific teaching challenges as well as the broader context of teacher professional identity (Korthagen, 2001). The scope of reflection can extend beyond classroom teaching to encompass the socio-political environment outside the classroom (Smyth, 1989). The benefits of reflection include expanding and deepening professional development, enhancing teachers' professional competence, and helping them find solutions to challenges in their teaching practices (Korthagen, 2001).

Reflection is one of the key factors promoting teacher development (Martin & Storm, 2006). Pennington and Brock (2012) explored how teachers' reflections on cultural backgrounds and teaching practices influenced their professional growth. Their research indicated that elementary English teachers reflected on their professional behaviors, tasks, and responsibilities, as well as their experiences teaching language minority students and students of color. This reflection allowed them to recognize cultural identity as an essential aspect of their teacher identity. Furthermore, teachers acknowledged the significant role that cultural and linguistic differences play in educational settings, which contributed to the development of a social language ideology (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Additionally, Galindo (2007) analyzed the identity construction process of a South African female teacher. The findings revealed that her identity development was shaped not only by her learning experiences but also by her reflections on various life incidents. By recognizing Spanish as a vital part of her identity, she initiated

bilingual education for her students (in both English and Spanish), thus affirming the value of her mother tongue.

3.4.4.3 Belief

Teacher identity encompasses a range of beliefs, values, attitudes, and competencies (Farrell, 2000). Korthagen (2004) proposed a model outlining the structure of a prominent teacher, which includes three key components: mission, identity, and belief. Prominent teachers construct their identities based on a sense of mission, which, in turn, can promote changes in their beliefs. Therefore, teacher identity, teacher belief, and mission are inherently interconnected. According to Helms (1998), teacher identity consists of values and beliefs, selfexpectations, future aspirations, actions, and the expectations of others. These factors are influenced by teachers' experiences within their sociocultural environments. He emphasized that teachers' values and beliefs are core concepts of teacher identity due to the close relationship between these aspects and teachers' expectations for themselves and society in the future. This suggests that teacher identity encompasses not only "who I am" but also "who I aspire to be as a teacher" (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Consequently, investigating the processes through which teacher identity evolves as a result of teacher values and beliefs is essential. Hong Young-suk (2014) interviewed a primary school English teacher to explore the relationship between his beliefs about English and his identity. The findings revealed that when the teacher adopted a linguistic perspective, viewing English as a form of power, he identified as a "non-native English teacher." However, when he considered English as a means of communication, his identity shifted to that of "an English teacher with high teaching ability" and "a manager of native English teachers."

Day and Kington (2008) categorized teacher identity into three types: professional identity, situated identity, and personal identity. Professional identity reflects teachers' recognition of social expectations associated with being a "good teacher"; situated identity emphasizes the influence of the school environment and culture on teachers; personal identity pertains to aspects of teachers' identities outside of school, such as their roles in family or other social contexts. To highlight the distinctions between the identities of foreign language teachers and those of general educators, Yang (2016) underscored the importance of language and cultural factors in shaping the dimensions of language teacher identity. Language identity pertains to attitudes toward language (including the mother tongue, target language, and languages in general), while cultural identity relates to attitudes toward culture (including one's own culture, that of the target language country, and global culture).

In summary, the dimensions of foreign language teachers' identity can be divided into professional identity, teaching identity, and language/cultural identity. In other words, teachers' professional beliefs, teaching beliefs, and language/cultural beliefs are closely intertwined with their actual and aspirational identities. In this study, "professional beliefs" refer to individual teachers' views, attitudes, values, and missions regarding their profession and subject matter; "teaching beliefs" encompass teachers' firm convictions related to teaching activities, including educational philosophies, teaching goals, roles, methods, and subject knowledge; and "language/cultural beliefs" reflect foreign language teachers' attitudes toward the target language and its culture, broadly encompassing their overall perspectives on language and culture.

3.4.4.4 School culture

As a social organization, schools play a pivotal role in shaping teachers' professional identities (Duff & Uchida, 1997), as teachers spend most of their careers within these environments. Drawing on Wenger's (1998) social theory of identity formation, Tsui (2007) investigates the construction and reconstruction of professional identity through narrative inquiry into the lived experiences of in-service English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) teachers. Based on the participant's stories, Tsui identifies the positive role that the subject plays in society during the identity formation process. Conversely, teachers' initiatives may be constrained by consistent demands from policies or organizations. Moreover, the school's organizational culture can adversely affect teacher identity. For instance, Trent and Gao (2009) conducted interviews with eight second-career English teachers in Hong Kong to explore how to better support their professional development. The findings indicate that these teachers' skills and experiences often go unrecognized by the school, leading to significant identity crises within their professional roles.

Additionally, the organizational culture of a school significantly impacts teachers' teaching behaviors, thought processes, and educational values. This cultural influence is both enduring and static, potentially leading to skepticism, denial, or even resistance to reforms as teachers strive to uphold their values (Cao & Lu, 2005). Whether teachers support or oppose reforms within their school organization, the interplay between 'new' and 'old' organizational cultures can profoundly affect their identity and self-perception. The 'old' culture often causes teachers to adhere to established behavioral norms, seeking to avoid educational risks. In contrast, the 'new' culture encourages creativity and opportunities for self-development amid educational reform. This conflict between 'old' and 'new'

cultures can significantly influence the identification and construction of teacher identity (Li, 2009).

In the current school organizational system, a pervasive bureaucratic culture exists, and teachers, as members of this system, are inevitably affected by it. Within a bureaucratic framework, teachers are often positioned at the lower end of the organizational hierarchy, facing coercive pressure from school leaders that hampers effective communication with administrators. Consequently, teachers often struggle to express their legitimate needs. This cultural formation can restrict teachers' identities, making it challenging for them to cultivate a sense of belonging and security (Busher, 2006). A teacher's professional identity emerges from the interplay between personal agency and social context. To foster a sense of belonging, individuals must actively engage in their professional activities (van Oers, 2002).

Focusing on two distinct school management cultures—‘strong social suggestion organization’ and ‘weak social suggestion organization’— Vähäsantanen et al. (2008) utilized open-ended narrative interviews to investigate how teachers perceived the social cues within their organizations and how these perceptions related to their agency. The results indicate that teachers are more likely to commit to their school’s organizational development when the culture emphasizes teacher agency and offers opportunities to fulfill their professional goals. While much research on the impact of the school organizational environment on teacher identity has concentrated on the negative effects—such as the bureaucratic system’s suppression of teachers, the stifling of initiative, and the identity shocks arising from differing cultures during educational reforms—it is equally important to recognize the role of organizational support in teacher identity development. When teachers perceive genuine interest and concern from

their schools, it fosters emotional attachment and a sense of identity, leading to a strong desire to remain within the institution.

3.4.4.5 National Educational Policy

In the long term, contradictions exist in the perception of teachers' role in educational reform. Some people censure teachers impeding the promotion of reform; on the other hand; on the other hand, teachers are thought to play a promising role in educational reform. For example, the top-down education reform movement in the United States in the early 1980s regarded "teacher" as the root cause of low teaching quality and academic standards. They are seen as fundamental answers to problems, requiring more autonomy for teachers (Huang, 1992). Such a shift in educational policy reform is directly associated with the issues of whether teachers should afford subjectivity and how teachers adapt to policy change in a short time.

As far as China is concerned, various measures and schemes have been proposed since the educational reform began in the middle of the 1980s. In the curriculum reform of elementary education, whether empowerment of curriculum management or emphasis on teacher autonomy of curriculum ideas, the aim is to effectively improve education's disadvantages. However, it is found that the teachers' role cannot be transferred as expected before the reform. The primary reason is that the professional role of teachers, which is set by the policy and thought to promote curriculum reform, is often difficult to expand due to the lack of teachers' approval and wishful thinking (Zhou, 2006).

Curriculum management or emphasis on teacher autonomy of curriculum ideas, the aim is to effectively improve education's disadvantages. However, it is found

that the teachers' role cannot be transferred as expected before the reform. The primary reason is that the professional role of teachers, which is set by the policy and thought to promote curriculum reform, is often difficult to expand due to the lack of teachers' approval and wishful thinking (Zhou, 2006).

In essence, teachers must readapt to the new requirement of reform policy in every adjustment and shift of educational policies (Bolívar & Domingo, 2006). To some extent, their original lifestyle and teaching behavior must be broken up, which challenges their identity. However, when teachers attempt to play a subjective role in breaking the habitual teaching status quo, they will encounter the intervention of various other educational policies. Day (2003) argues that teaching activities in most countries in the world are all intervened by the local government in the form of the national curriculum, national examinations, and school quality. Such erosion effect on teacher autonomy may challenge teachers' individual, group, and professional identities. He also adds that although the content, speed, and direction of school reform are different in every country, they all have many problems, such as challenging existing teaching practices and generating instability, increasing teachers' workload, and no attention to teacher identity. For teachers themselves, their identities are formed during educational reform, which may experience shifting identity crises. Teachers' identity crises often stem from fears that frequent changes will create too much uncertainty in the future. In studying social and emotional factors in teachers' work, Hargreaves (1994) manifests that the change in educational policy easily damages teachers' emotional devotion. Therefore, teachers prefer to stay in a 'comfort zone, avoiding the inadaptation arising from the policy change.

3.4.6 Empirical studies on empathy and professional identity

Empathy in the educational context refers to teachers' ability to understand and share students' feelings. It involves two dimensions: cognitive empathy (the capacity to understand others' views and mental states) and emotional empathy (the capacity to share and resonate with others' emotional experience) (Smith, 2006). Empathy is important for creating a supportive and effective learning environment, allowing teachers to establish a good rapport with students, perceive and respond to students' emotional and academic needs, and foster a positive classroom climate. (Davis, 1983). Furthermore, empathy can enhance the quality of teacher-student interaction. It enables teachers to understand students' perspectives, perceive their non-verbal signals, and provide care when students need help. Such emotional support can promote a high-quality interaction, which is pivotal for student development (Sun et al., 2023). Empathic teachers can also recognize students' emotions such as sadness or boredom and adjust their teaching approaches accordingly (Aldrup et al., 2022). Teacher professional identity is composed of self-perception (how teachers view themselves in their professional roles), professional belief and values (core principles that guide teaching practice), and reflective practice (continuous self-assessment and teaching improvement) (Beijaard et al., 2004). Zembylas (2005) highlighted that empathy significantly shapes professional identity by affecting their interactions with students, classroom management and teaching practice.

Qualitative research on teacher empathy and professional identity focused on how empathy is shaped by self-conception, belief, value and a sense of goal. Empathy is not only an emotional response, but also associated with how teachers see themselves, their roles and relationships between their students, colleagues and the educational setting.

Research shows that empathy is the core of teachers to define their professional identities. Teachers regard them as a developer or guide, and these roles need to build a deep emotional connection with students. Empathy helps teachers to maintain consistency in their professional responsibilities and values of caring, supporting and student-centered learning (Zembylas, 2003). Specifically, in a challenging context, empathy plays a vital role in helping teachers to cope with emotional needs in their work and form a professional identity with strong resilience and adaptability. Kelchtermans (2005) used case studies to explore how teachers maintain their professional identities through empathy in a disadvantaged school environment. The results discovered that these teachers utilized empathy to address social and emotional challenges in students' life, helping them keep motivation and connection with their professional roles.

However, empathy is a double-edged sword, which may lead to burnout if teachers cannot keep a balance between in empathy and self-caring (de Matos Duarte, 2016). Teachers who strongly identify their roles from the emotional perspective are more likely to become burnout. This may challenge their professional identities (Chang, 2009). According to Hargreaves (1998), although empathy is important to teachers' professional identities, emotional labor involving empathy toward students often raise burnout. The participant teachers stated that they attempted to balance their empathic engagement and needs of emotional boundaries, which mirrored a tension between empathy and professional sustainability.

To prevent job burnout, it suggested that implementing reflective practices can enhance teachers' ability to incorporate empathy in their professional identities (Bukor, 2016). Through reflective practices, teachers can deepen their understanding of how empathy influences their roles as an educator, and

classroom interactions shaped by emotional reactions. Rodgers and Scott (2008) encouraged teachers to use reflective diaries recording their emotional experiences in class. The analysis illustrated that empathy was often introduced as a key component of their reflections, revealing that how teachers treated their emotional reactions as a part of professional identities. Additionally, school culture and organizational expectations can also help to shape teacher experiences and ways of expressing empathy, in return, which can influence their professional identities (Zembylas, 2003). The school, which encourages emotional connections and student-centered teaching, makes teachers effectively integrate empathy into their professional identities. Schutz (2006) found that teachers who worked in a collaborative and supportive environment are more likely to regard empathy as a pivotal component of professional identity. Conversely, those who work in a more rigid or bureaucratic setting felt stressful and prioritized academic achievement rather than emotional connections.

3.5 Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, which integrates the ecological theory, narrative identity theory, and perspectives on post structuralism and positive psychology. These theoretical perspectives help us have a deep understanding of empathic experiences from language teachers in different institutional contexts in China, and the interplay between empathy and their professional identity.

The core of ecological framework is Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, which conceptualized human development (including emotion and professional development) as interactions between several embedded environmental systems. According to Schutz (2014), the microsystem contains direct relationships, such as the teacher-student interaction and interactions between students, teachers and parents, where empathy is often enacted. The mesosystem represents interactions

between different microsystem (the link to family-school- community). The exosystem has an impact on institutional and administrative policies, thereby indirectly influencing teachers' emotional experiences. The macrosystem is related to broader cultural norms and ideological beliefs of teaching, emotion and professionalism. Finally, the chronosystem emphasizes the temporal dimension, including the changes of professional development and institutional or social expectations over time. This framework can facilitate to explain how expressions of teacher empathy are influenced by contextual mediators, and how norms and social and cultural structures influence emotional labor and identity negotiation.

To explore teacher identity, this study draws on the narrative identity theory (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). It is believed that professional identity can be constructed through personal and professional stories and constantly influenced by interactions, experiences and reflections in a specific cultural and normative context. Narrative inquiry can examine how teachers' emotional experiences (including empathic moments) are narrated and interpreted, thereby revealing how identities are performed, questioned and reshaped over time (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995).

From the post-structuralist perspective, emotion is not an intimate and static state, but performative behaviors embedded within discourse, culture, and power structure. Emotion like empathy is restricted by norms, shaped by social expectations and negotiated by the power relationship in the educational space (Zembylas, 2005). This perspective plays a significant role in analyzing the emotional tension experienced by public-school and private-institution teachers when they demonstrate empathy.

To support the analysis of empathy as a positive emotion in teaching practices, this study integrates positive psychology, especially the ‘EMPATHICS’ model (Oxford, 2016). This framework confirms these factors (emotion, meaning, perseverance, time, autonomy, thinking habits, intelligence, character strength, and self-factors) as important components in the development of language learners and teachers. In this model, empathy is not only a spontaneous reaction but also a culturable ability, which can enhance resilience, engagement and emotional health. This viewpoint highlights the positive role of empathy in language learning and teaching and teacher identity development.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed and critically examined key literatures about empathy and language teacher professional identity, particularly under the Chinese cultural and normative background. The review first traced the evolution of emotional studies in language education, emphasizing early concerns on negative emotions (especially anxiety), and recent transformation of positive psychology. The latter recognized the constructive function of emotions like empathy in teaching.

The detailed discussion of empathy revealed that it is a multidimensional concept, including cognitive, emotional and behavioral components. This chapter also illustrated the distinctions between relevant concepts like sympathy and compassion, underlining their unique functions in helping teachers cope with professional requirements as well as emotionally interacting with students.

The review further indicated that empathy is not a phenomenon that can be commonly expressed and experienced, but closely related to contexts, cultural intermediary, and discourse construction. In the Chinese educational environment, empathy is often exhibited through indirect communication, moral responsibilities

and behaviors that conform to Confucian values (such as benevolence and harmony). Meanwhile, teachers' emotional expressions are shaped by norms and hierarchy, regulating the way and time to display empathy.

Finally, this chapter lays the conceptual foundation for the theoretical framework for this study. The framework learnt from the ecological theory, the narrative identity theory, the post-structural perspective and positive psychology—especially Oxford's (2016) 'EMPATHICS' model. These frameworks constructed a strong perspective, used for investigating how teachers experienced and expressed empathy, and how empathy promoted continuous construction of teacher profession identity in public schools and private institutions.

In sum, the examined literatures did not confirm the central position of empathy in language education, but also emphasized the necessity of developing contextual sensitivity based on narrative research to reveal how teachers understand their own emotional experiences and the relationship between their professional roles. This insight provides a reference for the design and analysis focus of this study, aiming to explore the personal experiences of English teachers in China from a narrative perspective.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures. To address the research questions, a qualitative approach will be adopted. The primary data sources include transcripts of interviews. Given that narrative inquiry is a suitable method for exploring teachers' experiences in their professional lives and gaining insight into their thoughts and feelings about their careers (Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik, 2014), it is an appropriate fit for this study. It allows for an in-depth exploration of the role of ELT teachers' empathy in shaping their professional identities.

4.1 Research Questions

1. Under what circumstances do empathy arise when teachers interact with different individuals across ecological systems?

(1) How do they emotionally react to such situations?

(2) What kinds of emotions will evoke teacher empathy?

2. What causes the differences in how teachers in public and private institutions express empathy across the ecological systems?

3. What is the role of empathy in teachers' professional identity?

4.2 Overview of Research Ontological and Epistemological Perspectives

Ontology and epistemology form the foundation of how individuals understand the human world (Marsh & Furlong, 2002). These concepts guide how people perceive reality, acquire knowledge about the world, and verify that knowledge. All research is grounded in specific ontological and epistemological assumptions (see Figure 3.1). In this study, the researcher explained the phenomenon under

investigation through a particular ontological and epistemological lens. Ontology deals with the nature of existence and raises questions such as "What is truth?" or "What is reality?" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). This study adopts a subjectivist ontological approach, where realities or truths are seen as multiple, intangible psychological constructs that are experienced, socially constructed, and contextually situated. Thus, they must be understood within local contexts, even though they can be shared across different cultures and settings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Figure 3.1 Methodological Framework

Ontological stance: realities are subjective and multiple.

Epistemological stance: knowledge is constructed through

the interpretation of observed phenomena.



Methodological: narrative inquiry and case studies



Methods: narrative frames and semi-structured interviews



Data analysis: thematic analysis and constant contrast analysis

The study aims to explore how empathy shapes Chinese English teachers' professional identities from both public schools and private institutions,

depending on how they interpret their lived experiences and express their emotions. Although all participants have received similar English language education in public schools, their internalization of what it means to learn and teach may vary.

Factors such as family upbringing, social and economic status, policy, and school culture also shape how they make meaning of these experiences. As a researcher, I must remain sensitive to these unique interpretations rather than expecting commonalities among participants.

The second philosophical stance concerns my epistemological views (Figure 3.1) on understanding the observed phenomenon of teacher experiences with empathy. Epistemology clarifies what knowledge entails, how it is applied, and why it functions as it does (Rescher, 2003). It is essential to consider how knowledge is obtained and how we understand the world (Heigham & Croker, 2009). I believe we understand our identities more intimately than anyone else; therefore, to comprehend teacher identity, I need to engage in conversations with participants, gaining insight into how they explain and interpret their own identities. However, my interpretation of their views is inevitably influenced by my own lived experiences as an English language teacher in a Chinese senior high school and my engagement with teaching and identity theories. Croker (2009, p.11) suggests that every qualitative researcher carries their "intellectual baggage and lived experiences" into their research field. Rather than claiming objectivity and fairness in analyzing participants' stories, I must acknowledge and reflect on my own positionality in this study.

By adopting interpretivism as the research paradigm, my understanding of language teacher identity is shaped by how I interpret participants' opinions and discourse. Interpretivism is particularly suited for investigating teacher identity as it seeks to interpret social life within its cultural and historical contexts (Crotty, 1998). I recognize that teacher identity must be situated within the social and cultural environment in which participants live. Thus, I need to understand teaching practices and related behaviors from the participants' perspectives.

4.3 Participants

This study involves ten participants, all with at least five years of English teaching experience. Eight are female, and two are male. Five of the participants have worked in private institutions, with three now running their own studios. The remaining five participants teach at the same high school, and three have served as class headteachers. Participants were "purposively" selected (Cohen et al., 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to ensure consistency in materials and curriculum, as all are involved in the same teaching program. Considering Duff's (2008) hypothesis proposed in case studies in applied linguistics, he suggested that it is common to select fewer cases to analyze and employed various instruments to gain information. He also empathized that 'the smaller the number of participants, the easier it will be to provide an in-depth description and contextualization of each, taking fully into account the complexity of interactions and the perspectives of the participants' (p. 124). As a result, ten focal cases were selected. In selecting participants, the researcher prioritized those with rich experiences or stories to share.

All the participants in this study were personally known to the researcher, which carries both benefits and potential limitations. On the one hand, pre-existing relationships facilitated to build a rapport and a sense of emotional security,

encouraging participants to openly talk about their personal and professional experiences (McConnell-Henry et al., 2010). This familiarity can enhance the richness and depth of the qualitative data. However, this might raise some important methodological problems, such as bias, subjectivity and trustworthiness of research findings (Adler, 2022). The participants might respond with what they believed to meet predictions or social expectations (a kind of reaction deviation). To buffer this situation, the researcher adopted reflective practice, including memo-writing, peer reports and transparent data interpretation to critically examine their own assumptions and positionality throughout the research process.

Originally, I planned to invite several pre-service teachers and experienced teachers from a public school to participate in my research. I expected to investigate the experiences of pre-service teachers attending the practicum. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 led to a prevention of the practicum in any public school in China and no pre-service teachers were allowed to enter the schools. My study had to be adjusted accordingly. Although the participants finally were selected among experienced teachers, they all had experiences from a novice teacher to professional teacher. They can also provide their life history of this experience, and I also prepared some interview questions to guide them to reflect it again. Having consulted the literature, I discovered that most research tended to investigate the professional identity of pre-service teachers or beginning teachers (Lamote & Engels, 2010; Pillen et al., 2013; Turbill & Kervin, 2007). However, it is equally important to focus on experienced teachers. This might be a research gap that is worth exploring.

There are several reasons for choosing teachers from both public schools and private institutions. Firstly, there is a significant difference between these two institutions in terms of workplace structure, job security, curriculum autonomy

and pedagogical freedom. Public-school teachers are often faced with more strict administration, a large-scale class and higher-risk national examinations. In contrast, private-institutional teachers are more flexible, but they also encounter lower job stability and pressure driven by the market. These different contexts may shape their emotional experiences, sources of pressure, thereby affecting their ways to express and interpret empathy. For example, public-school teachers may be emotionally constrained by institutional expectations, while private-institution teachers can become more freely to express empathy but feel lonely or less supportive. By comparing both groups, this study seeks to reveal how institutional ecology contributes to divergent identity trajectories and emotional practices in ELT.

The study draws on ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), with the chronosystem accounting for changes over time, making teaching experience a key variable. Teachers' empathic experiences and professional identities may differ based on the number of years they have taught English. For novice teachers, particularly in their first year, emotions and professional identities are often unstable and subject to significant change (Cheung, 2014). Additionally, workplace characteristics shape their attitudes toward their profession. This study aims to investigate how teachers' professional identities are reconstructed and how these identities evolve in tandem with their empathy and emotions throughout their careers. A central question is whether their professional identities become relatively stable or remain fluid, and whether empathy plays a determining role in this process.

Table 3.1 Summary of Participants' personal information

Name	Level	Number of learners per group	Years of Teaching	Working Places
Chen (male)	High school (Grade 2)	40-50	8 years	Public school
Zhai (female)	High school (Grade 1)	40-50	over 15 years	Public school
Wang (female)	High school (Grade 1)	40-50	over 15 years	Public school
Xiong (Female)	High school (Grade 3)	40-50	7 years	Public school
Ling (Female)	High school (Grade 2)	40-50	7 years	Public school
Liu ((Female)	Primary school, junior school, and high school	5-10	over 15 years	Private institution (currently running her own studio)

Jia (Female)	Junior school, and high school	5-15	6 years	Private institution (currently running her own studio)
Xiang (Female)	Junior school, and high school	5-20	9 years	Private institution
Zou (Female)	Junior school, and high school	5-10	8 years	Private institution
Li (Female)	Junior school, and high school	5-10	10 years	Private institution (currently running his own studio)

4.4 Researcher's Role

Another reason for the selection of the contexts was that the researcher had previously taught in the public school for three years and worked in a private institution for two years, and already had a degree of background knowledge about the settings and participants. This was expected to speed up the process of attempting to gain 'insider' perspectives on the context under investigations. Furthermore, as the researcher was familiar to many staff in both workplaces, although not necessarily with the participants of this research, her role in the community could be more readily accepted than an unknown researcher. In

addition, access to the site of research was more easily gained through the researcher's continuing contact with the school and the institution.

While the researcher's familiarity with the environment might simplify the process of presenting insider perspectives, it could also pose challenges in adopting a more objective 'outsider' viewpoint (Richards, 2003). Therefore, it was essential for the researcher to be cautious about assuming significant aspects of the context or overlooking alternative perspectives on events as perceived by participants. To address this, two strategies were employed: maintaining a research diary to document the researcher's reflections on the research process and generating periodic fieldwork reports reviewed by individuals unfamiliar with the research context.

4.5 Research Approaches

There are many specific research approaches in qualitative paradigms, such as narrative inquiry, case study, ethnography, and action research (Heighman & Crocker, 2009). This research explicitly uses the method of narrative case study, which refers to case studies with narrative characteristics.

4.5.1 Narrative Inquiry

Teacher education and teacher life are closely intertwined, and narrative inquiry provides a lens to explore the dynamics of life. Through narrative inquiry, teacher development can be observed in a rich and meaningful way (Craig, 2011). Connely and Clandinin (1990) were the first to use narrative inquiry to investigate "what teachers understand" and "how teachers understand." They define narrative as a means to understand experience, emphasizing collaboration between the

researcher and the research subject. This collaboration takes place over time and in a variety of contexts, through social interactions with the environment. The researcher engages in this mode of inquiry in a spirit of collaboration, culminating in a process of sharing, retelling, and re-experiencing the stories that shape individuals' personal and social lives.

Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) elaborated on the three dimensions of narratives: time, place, and society. In the time dimension, researchers analyze participants' past experiences to understand how these experiences affect their present and future decisions. This analysis must consider how narrators construct or reconstruct their identities in relation to the social dimension, which involves individual interactions and societal influences. The social dimension has two aspects: personal, which encompasses feelings, hopes, needs, and morality, and societal, which pertains to external conditions, personal contexts, and the people and events that surround narrators. In the place dimension, Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) highlight the need to analyze the contexts or physical locations where events occurred, as incidents are often shaped by their environments. Hence, people's experiences are constructed within society and are deeply tied to their past and present situations. These experiences are context-dependent and associated with specific moments and places (Alexandra & Aguolar, 2011).

Narrative inquiry is not limited to personal experiences but also encompasses broader narratives within society, culture, and institutions, where personal experiences are shaped, expressed, and constructed. It studies the stories that individuals "have and tell" and focuses on understanding personal experiences through listening, observing, living with participants, and interpreting their stories (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Narrative inquiry explores experiences within

interpersonal relationships and communities, emphasizing expertise and cognition in a relational and participatory manner (Wertz, 2011).

This approach combines storytelling with qualitative research, using stories both as research data and as tools for data analysis and presentation (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2013). There are two primary methods for analyzing narrative data: narrative analysis and the analysis of narratives (Herman & Vervaeck, 2019). Narrative analysis involves using storytelling as a method to analyze and present data, transforming non-story data into stories to convey meaning. In contrast, analysis of narratives uses the stories themselves as data for analysis. In applied linguistics, the latter is often used to analyze fragmented conversational data, such as interview transcripts, which can be challenging to integrate into a cohesive narrative.

Several approaches exist for collecting narrative data, including biographical research, autobiographical research, life history, life story, and oral history (Herman & Vervaeck, 2019). This study will employ life-history interviews (semistructured interviews) and focus groups to collect data. Life history research highlights how social contexts shape individual identity (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). As life history is chronological, it can reveal the dynamic changes that an individual teacher experiences in their surrounding environment. These stories provide readers with a clear understanding of how individuals make sense of their experiences in unpredictable contexts, allowing them to continuously construct and reconstruct their identities (Benmayor & Skones, 1994).

4.5.2 Narrative Case Study

A case study primarily aims to provide an in-depth description and analysis of a single event, phenomenon, or social unit (Merriam, 1998). It encompasses three key characteristics: 1) Specificity, which focuses on investigating a particular context or social phenomenon; 2) Descriptiveness, offering a detailed and vivid portrayal of the subject; and 3) Enlightenment, helping individuals develop a new understanding of the phenomenon. Analyses of case studies are generally divided into two types: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. A within-case analysis involves an in-depth exploration of each case independently, while cross-case analysis builds on these independent studies, conducting horizontal comparisons, inductions, summarizations, and conclusions across multiple cases (Yin, 1989). This approach allows case studies to more effectively capture individuals' emotions and identities within a specific context, identify structures and patterns, and provide insights into new phenomena through comparative analysis.

However, intensive case study analysis may sometimes disrupt the continuity and richness of events and overlook the evolving process and holistic nature of teacher emotions and identities. To address this limitation, incorporating narrative inquiry can complement the case study approach. This combination not only preserves the strength of exploring teacher experiences but also enables a deeper analysis of each case within an ecological analytical framework (Day & Harris, 2016). Another advantage of introducing narrative inquiry into case studies is that narratives provide easier access to participants' life stories, allowing for a deeper understanding of the complexities within teacher experiences. Xu and Connelly (2009) emphasize that narrative inquiry is flexible, enabling researchers to collect and analyze data in diverse ways. Through narrative inquiry, a study can gather data from multiple sources (Benson, 2014). In this study, semi-structured

interviews will be used to collect oral data, while journals will capture written reflections.

Participants were asked to document their experiences in language teaching through a series of stories. For instance, when examining their teaching experience, an initial interview will be conducted to first gain their personal information and then ask questions related to the research. The interview will focus on specific incidents that occurred during teaching, with questions such as, "Can you describe an event that left a lasting impression on you and your students?" and "How has this event affected you?" In addition to the interviews, some informal interviews were conducted to obtain feedback or more explanations through online chat or email based on the face-to-face interview data. The purpose of the supplement of informal interviews or chats is to enhance a deep understanding of their life experiences and improve the data quality.

4.5.3 Reasons for Choosing Current Research Approaches

As one of the founders of narrative inquiry, Brunner (1998) points out that a good story and an organized argument are distinct from each other. Arguments convince readers of their veracity, while stories convince readers of their vividness. It is generally believed that scientific research is the way to create and circulate knowledge, which tends to rationalize arguments rather than form narratives. However, science researchers question this viewpoint and argue that the conclusions drawn from theoretical arguments are divorced from natural life phenomena and expressed in the form of academic writing and cannot be accurately convincing because they lack the "vivid" quality of a good story (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Under this critique, the social sciences took a narrative turn to study people's experiences in the form of storytelling. This academic context is where the proposed study situate itself.

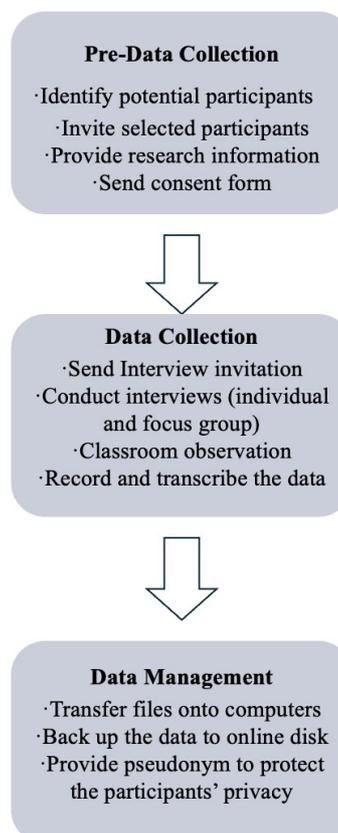
Connelly and Clandinin (1999) indicate that understanding teachers' professional identity needs to follow their life stories. As stories provide the main plot, teachers can utilize this plot to make their experiences and themselves meaningful (Tsui, 2007). Barkhuizen et al. (2014) suggest conceptualizing narrative studies as systematically exploring teachers' stories and language use. Narratives are always associated with teachers' personal and emotional experiences and attitudes. Positive experiences and emotions can shape positive identity. In contrast, negative experiences and emotions may conflict with current educational values and beliefs, which may in turn impede teachers' positive identity development (Thomas et al., 2005). Through narrative expressions, teachers may listen to and experience their 'inner voice', reflecting on their external and multiple roles, shaping a more vibrant self-image. Only via self-voice can the self-identity of teachers not be neglected and become meaningful.

Furthermore, introducing narrative inquiry into a case study is to study teacher emotions. Firstly, narrative inquiry facilitates the expression of emotions. Under the positivist research paradigm, studies often conceal the emotions of teachers to generate the so-called 'scientific conclusion' for the long term. However, interpretivism advocates narrative studies to allow teachers to talk about their professional experiences and use stories to describe their authentic feelings (Caldwell, 2015). Secondly, narratives not only recount what happened in the past, but more importantly, how narrators interpret these actions and attach meaning to them (Chen, 2010). Narrative inquiry can help the researcher better understand experiences of the participants and the reasons for the formation of their emotions. Finally, narratives benefit the transformation of teachers and the context. Compared with other forms of expression like conversation, narratives are easily understood by readers.

4.6 Data Collection

In the interpretative study, it is crucial to collect information about the participants' voice and reflective discourse, which can be achieved by examining interactions in the natural environment through interviews. The purpose is to describe, analyze, and interpret characteristics in specific situations and maintain the complexity and convey the participants' viewpoints (Borko et al., 2007). The data process is concluded in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 Data collection procedures



4.6.1 Class observation

Classroom observation is a common method for collecting relevant data in second language classes. The rationale for using this instrument is twofold. First, the classroom is the primary environment where teachers implement their teaching practices. Observing teachers in their natural work setting allows for a

more authentic understanding of their knowledge in action. This method also enables the researcher to analyze whether the beliefs and concepts teachers express in interviews align with their actual classroom behavior. Additionally, it provides insights into how classroom interactions reflect their discourse and behavior, addressing the research question, "Under what circumstances does empathy arise when teachers interact with different individuals within the ecological system?"

Second, classroom observation allows the researcher to maintain an open mind and make real-time reflections. By observing classroom behavior, the researcher can uncover key information that may have been overlooked during interviews and then verify it during follow-up discussions.

There are two types of classroom observation: participatory observation, where the researcher is directly involved in the class, and non-participatory observation, where the researcher observes as a passive onlooker (Liu, 2015). This study employed the latter approach, with the researcher sitting in the last row to avoid disturbing the participants. A modified version of the "Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning (TELL)" scale (Ding, 2014) was used to guide the observation. The scale was adjusted to better align with the research aims and questions.

The classroom observation framework included four sections: classroom setting, teaching activities, teaching materials, and classroom evaluation. The design not only considered the coherence of the teaching process but also incorporated specific requirements outlined in the "English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition)" in the chapter on "Implementation Suggestions." A detailed classroom observation form was used to record the performance of the four case teachers (see Appendix C).

4.6.2 Semi-structured Interview

DeMarrais (2004) defines a research interview as a process where researchers and participants engage in a conversation focused on the research questions. The most common form of an interview is face-to-face, where one person gathers information from another. Group formats can also be used to collect data, and face-to-face interviews are often seen as intentional conversations (Dexter, 1970).

The primary goal of an interview is to gather specific information that researchers seek about the thoughts and experiences of others (Patton, 2015, p.426). As Patton explains:

"We interview people because we want to learn what we cannot directly observe. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe past events. We cannot observe how people organize the world or the meanings they assign to events. We must ask questions about these matters."

Therefore, interviews allow us to access other people's perspectives. When we cannot observe behaviors, feelings, or how individuals interpret their surroundings, conducting an interview becomes essential. Interviews are also necessary when investigating unique past events.

Interviews are widely used in language learning and teaching research and are considered crucial for understanding the experiences, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and practices of teachers and learners (Borg, 2006; Norton, 2000; Benson, 2014). They allow researchers to explore the nuanced and subjective aspects of language education, which are often difficult to capture through

surveys or tests. Cohen et al. (2000) emphasize the significance of the subjectivity involved in interviews, noting that the data elicited depends on how the interaction between interviewer and interviewee is constructed. The data is also influenced by the degree of "directiveness" in the interview—how much the interviewer controls the direction and topics discussed (Richards, 2003). Therefore, interviews should not be seen as a superficial tool, but rather as an interactive process shaped by cultural context, where personal dynamics and constraints influence the conversation. Supplementing interviews with follow-up sessions and additional data sources can enhance the depth of the findings.

This study primarily uses semi-structured and focus group interviews to explore the role empathy plays in shaping teacher identity. Batson et al. (2004) argue that empathy is not a single emotion but encompasses a constellation of feelings. Accordingly, several interview questions were designed to explore participants' emotions and feelings. These questions serve as a guide to uncover teachers' experiences related to empathy during their interactions with the researcher. The interviews were conducted in the participants' first language (Chinese), which enhanced communication, fostered comfort and trust, and facilitated emotional expression (Cortazzi et al., 2011).

For the semi-structured interviews, each participant took part in four interviews based on the analytical framework (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem). The questions were designed to align with each ecosystem, but the wording and order of the questions were adjusted based on the needs of each interview. Each session lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. The initial interviews focused on basic information, such as teaching experience, class size, teaching materials, and daily routines. This information helped the researcher grasp the complexity and nuances of the participants' individual experiences, leading to a

deeper understanding of the research topic (Moore et al., 2021). Subsequent interviews followed a more open-ended format, allowing participants to discuss their feelings and reflect on their empathic experiences in professional interactions. These interviews not only addressed Research Question 2 but also provided insights into how empathy influenced the participants' evolving professional identities, contributing to Research Question 3.

4.6.3 Focus group interviews

After the individual interviews were completed, focus group interviews were conducted with public-school teachers (Group A) and private-institution teachers (Group B) to address Research Question 1. Carey (1994) defines focus groups as group meetings using semi-structured interviews, led by a facilitator in an informal setting. The goal is to collect information on a specific topic. Morgan (1996) identifies three key components of focus groups: 1) a structured method for data collection, 2) interaction as a data source, and 3) the researcher's active role in facilitating group discussion to gather data. Focus groups are particularly effective for capturing the social reality of a specific cultural group through direct engagement with participants' experiences (Hughes & DuMont, 1993). While Morgan (1996) notes that focus groups may not provide as much depth as participant observation or in-depth individual interviews, they combine the strengths of both methods, making them a valuable tool. Scholars recommend using focus groups to develop new insights, aligning with the goals of this study (McKinley et al., 1997).

In the focus group interviews, participants discussed specific topics related to their empathic experiences and feelings about teaching English and their professional interactions. Aligned with concepts of empathy, such as feeling others' emotions or adopting their perspectives (e.g., Davis, 1983; Hoffman, 1982;

Hogan, 1969), focus groups may help participants empathize with their colleagues' experiences during discussions. An interview guide was designed with key topics for discussion, and participants were informed about the questions beforehand. The guide aimed to stimulate interaction on the research topic, ensuring the researcher could gather all necessary information (Dilorio et al., 1994). Kingry et al. (1990) provided guidelines for developing interview questions, suggesting that questions should move from general to specific to encourage group participation from the start. However, these questions served only as a starting point, with the facilitator able to ask additional questions or make comments to prompt further discussion.

In this study, the focus groups were homogenous. Carey (1994) suggests that focus group members should share similarities, such as age, position, or career, as these factors can influence the quality of interaction. Calder (1997) adds that homogenous groups promote harmonious relationships. Therefore, public school teachers formed one group, and private-institution teachers formed the other. The participants in each group were already familiar with one another, either as classmates, friends, or colleagues. The size of the focus groups was also carefully considered. Kahn (1991, p.137) notes that a group should not be so large that it becomes unwieldy, but not so small that it provides no more insight than an individual interview. Merton's view, supported by other scholars, suggests an ideal group size of 6 to 10 members (Howard et al., 1989), or 4 to 8 (Kitzinger, 1994). Each focus group in this study consisted of five participants.

Stewart and Shamdasani (2014) argue that there are no strict rules for the number of focus group interviews needed, suggesting that even one focus group can be sufficient. This study followed that principle, conducting one focus group interview per group, each lasting 40 to 60 minutes. Participants took part in the group

interview after completing their individual interviews. During these sessions, they shared empathic experiences from their daily work and provided memorable examples from their classrooms.

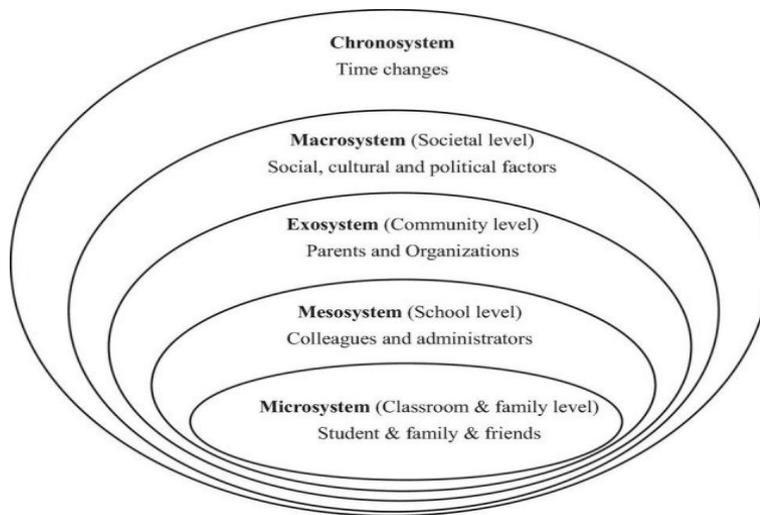
All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The subsequent analysis was qualitative, with responses coded to identify patterns, relationships, and significant incidents. These were further elaborated upon in the data analysis section. As opportunities arose, the researcher supplemented audio-recorded interviews with informal face-to-face or online conversations. Given the spontaneous nature of these informal interviews, audio recording was not feasible, so notes were taken instead.

4.7 Data Analysis

4.7.1 Analytical Framework

Considering the complexity of sociocultural and environmental factors influencing individual emotions, the researcher will adopt Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological framework, consisted of five systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (See Figure 3.4). Chu et al. (2021) highlight that this theory has provided a sound theoretical framework for exploring the setting in which teachers live and develop. It is also utilized to study language teacher psychology and practice (e.g., Edwards & Burns, 2016; Mercer, 2020; Tudor, 2003). Therefore, this research adopts the ecological system framework to investigate the dynamic development of teacher empathy and how their emotions and identities would change with empathy.

Figure 3.3 A revised framework adapted from Bronfenbrenner (2005, as cited in Chen (2020)



Following the framework and guidance of the ecological system, the researcher designed relevant interview questions (see Appendix 3). For instance, the microsystem focuses on the direct relationships between teachers and their students, family, or friends. Questions like, "How do you get along with your students?" are included.

The mesosystem consists of the "linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 80). Although relationships with colleagues and administrators may not directly impact teachers, they may unconsciously concern themselves with how their behavior is evaluated or perceived in daily work (Xu, 2016). This indirect connection can influence teachers' emotions. The exosystem refers to broader social systems, including schools, authorities, and the larger community (Sun & Liu, 2021). Schools can significantly impact teacher emotions and identity. The macrosystem encompasses the overarching pattern of ideologies and the organization of social institutions within a particular culture or subculture (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 81), including regulations, values, laws, and policies

that shape the social context of teachers' work. For example, curriculum reforms may be a significant influence on the emotions of teachers participating in this study. The chronosystem refers to the development of experiences and events over time (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Teachers may experience various emotional episodes at different times, and their identities may evolve with years of teaching experience.

The researcher adopted the ecological framework because it reflects how the complex sociocultural world influences teacher development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). In recent decades, this ecological perspective has become prominent in studies of language teacher education, frequently being used to explore teacher psychology and development, including teacher emotions (Chen, 2019) and teacher identity (Goodnough, 2010). This framework helps illuminate how teachers' emotions and identities are shaped by the context in which they arise. Thus, this study not only examines teacher emotions and identities but also the contextual factors that shape them. The ecological framework provides a deeper understanding of these dynamics, helping both the researcher and participants recognize the development of emotions and identities and the interplay between them.

4.7.2 Coding

The qualitative data analysis began during data collection and continued until the report's completion. This progressive mode of analysis helps avoid the accumulation of field notes and transcribed data that can often delay the start of qualitative analysis (Liu, 2011). Moreover, it allows researchers to discover new problems during the process and adjust data collection methods to obtain more convincing data (Hurworth, 1997). The analysis process can be divided into three stages.

First, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) distinguish between field texts and research texts. When participants tell their stories, the sequence of events may be disrupted, and some meanings may be lost (Lu, 2005). To structure meaningful research texts, the researcher repeatedly reads field texts to explore the importance and meaning of the stories. During this stage, data—primarily collected from interviews—are organized into coherent interpretive texts. The researcher transcribes the recordings, adds annotations, and writes memos and research diaries.

Second, the study encodes and analyzes the data using the initial construction of research texts in Nvivo 14, employing a hybrid of deductive and inductive thematic analysis. Deductive thematic analysis, a theory-driven approach, begins with specific themes or codes derived from prior knowledge or a theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach is suitable when researchers have specific hypotheses to test or are working within a particular framework (Proudfoot, 2023). In this study, the first two research questions guide the researcher to focus on themes related to the interactions between teachers and students, parents, and colleagues. The five ecological systems serve as the primary themes for analyzing factors influencing teacher empathy.

Inductive thematic analysis, on the other hand, is data-driven, with themes emerging directly from the data rather than being imposed by pre-existing theories or frameworks (Terry et al., 2017). While the main themes of this study are determined by the research questions and theoretical framework, the details of each theme vary from case to case. The researcher reads the interview transcripts repeatedly, generating initial codes directly from the data. Codes are then categorized into potential themes, which are refined and defined. To answer the third research question—regarding the role of empathy in shaping teachers'

professional identities—inductive thematic analysis identifies themes such as "identity crisis," "identity conflicts," and "identity reconstruction" based on the participants' descriptions. This blended approach allows the researcher to analyze data within a deductive framework while remaining open to identifying new themes.

Finally, a within-case analysis is conducted to examine each case in detail, followed by cross-case analysis techniques (Creswell, 1998) to identify patterns, commonalities, and differences across participants. Using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978), the researcher identifies and categorizes common themes. The analysis includes open, axial, and selective coding to organize and refine the data (Williams & Moser, 2019).

4.7.3 Trustworthiness

This section outlines the strategies used to ensure the trustworthiness of this thesis. In qualitative research, different criteria are required compared to traditional notions of objectivity, validity, reliability, and generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These authors proposed four key criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative studies: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The following sections explain how these criteria were addressed in this study.

4.7.3.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to how well the research captures the authenticity of participants' voices and experiences. Rallis & Rossman (2009) suggest several strategies to establish credibility: 1) spending sufficient time with participants, 2) triangulation—using multiple methods and collecting data at different times to ensure comprehensive results, 3) member checks—involving participants in

revising and elaborating transcripts, 4) feedback from peer debriefers to refine research design, analysis, or interpretation, and 5) engaging in critical discussions with professionals.

In this project, the researcher maintained regular contact with participants following the interviews. Before conducting interviews, the researcher spent more than six months building relationships with participants, many of whom were former colleagues or close friends. Data sources included journals and interview recordings. After completing the research report, the researcher will invite a specialist in qualitative studies to help refine the analysis. The university's annual progression review also provides opportunities to receive feedback from professors in the field, offering valuable insights for revising the data analysis.

4.7.3.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the applicability of research findings to other contexts. Unlike generalizability, which aims for broad applicability, transferability highlights how research findings may relate to similar situations or groups. This approach acknowledges that qualitative research can provide valuable insights under specific circumstances, even if replicability is not the goal.

To demonstrate transferability, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research background, participants, and data collection methods, enabling other researchers to assess whether the findings apply to their own contexts. Additionally, data were gathered through multiple instruments, including interviews and observations, which enriched the findings and supported their applicability in other research areas.

4.7.3.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of research findings despite changes in context or participants. To ensure consistency, the researcher employed systematic and transparent data collection methods, including using standardized observation protocols and explicit documentation. Regular peer or expert consultations also helped to identify biases and improve methodological rigor. This collaborative approach encouraged critical reflection on methods and interpretations, enhancing the overall reliability of the study. Through reflective practices, the researcher examined how biases influenced the interpretation of the data.

4.7.3.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which findings are shaped by participants' responses rather than researcher bias. It emphasizes the need for neutrality and objectivity. The researcher maintained an audit trail to document every step of the research process, from data collection to analysis and interpretation. By providing explicit records, the researcher ensured transparency and accountability (Connelly, 2016). Additionally, the researcher kept a reflective journal to critically examine assumptions and motivations, which helped enhance the objectivity of the analysis.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are essential to ensure that the study does not pose risks to participants. Rallis & Rossman (2009) emphasize key ethical concerns in qualitative studies. First, the researcher will protect participants' privacy by omitting names and ages from interview transcripts. When sharing information, anonymity will be strictly maintained. Second, participants will sign a consent

form before data collection begins, affirming their right to know the study's purpose and to withdraw at any time. Third, the researcher will maintain consistent communication with participants, building rapport to facilitate long-term, in-depth interviews. This openness allows participants to share freely, resulting in richer data. After completing the research report, participants will review it, and any information they do not wish to disclose will be removed in accordance with their preferences. During data analysis, the researcher will ensure that individual information is concealed (Gibbs, 2018).

4.9 Methodology limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of empathy in shaping teachers' professional identities, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged.

4.9.1 Researcher-Participant Relationship

All the participants were the researchers' previous colleagues and friends. Although this familiar relationship can help build trust, keep open mind, and show real emotions during interviews, it may bring risks of responsive bias. Participants might adjust their answers according to their perceived expectations, while the interpretations from the researcher were possibly influenced by pre-existing knowledge. Despite the use of reflective diaries and peer debriefing to mitigate this situation, the internal study challenged the neutrality, requiring careful self-recognition.

4.9.2 Uneven use of observational data

Although classroom observations were included in the research design, the data collected through this method demonstrated to be of limited analytical value. The observation did not capture sufficient emotion or relevant behavior to identity, thereby failing to make a meaningful contribution to research questions.

At the beginning of the research design, classroom and institutional observations were involved in the data collected methods, providing the interview data with a contextual foundation. The study originally aimed to capture non-verbal behavior related to empathy and teacher identity, emotional interactions and institutional practices, particularly within the real-time classroom. It was expected to help triangulate with the interview data and enrich the research findings through detailed descriptions.

However, in the field investigation, it is found that most observational data lacked analytical value for the focus of research. Many observational results were either logically constrained or inconsistent with themes of emotion and identity in the interviews. Additionally, teachers also realized that they were investigated, which might influence their behavior, leading to unnatural interactions as expected or insufficient emotional expressions.

Therefore, fewer observational field notes were incorporated and primarily used as complementary for interviews rather than the core data. While the original inclusion of observations was methodologically justified, their limited contribution to the final analysis reflects the complexity of studying affective and internal dimensions of teacher identity through external observation alone.

4.9.3 Sampling scope and participant composition

Due to the pandemic-related restrictions on school access, the study excluded pre-service teachers or novice teachers, leading to only focus on experienced teachers. It might ignore perspectives from those teachers at the early stage of identity formation. In addition, although the study covered teachers from public schools and private institutions, the sample of each group was small, limiting the ability to fully compare patterns across institutional contexts.

4.9.4 Language and translation limitations

All the interviews were conducted in Chinese and then translated into English by the researcher. Although this approach ensured participants' comfort and enriched the data, nuanced meanings might lose or change during the translating process, especially emotional or metaphorical expressions related to empathy.

Chapter 5: Narrative Case studies of Chinese ELT Teachers

This chapter uses the narrative case study to investigate different situations where empathy might arise among Chinese high school English teachers from the ecological perspective and how teachers emotionally react to such situations in accordance with empathy. The participant teacher has been working in the public school for more than five years. The case analysis will begin with the background information of the participant, the language teaching experiences, and basic information about students and modules he teaches.

5.1 Case 1: Mr. Chen (an Experienced Public-school English Teacher)

Mr. Chen grew up in a middle-scale city in Guizhou Province, located in the southwest of China. He went to the University in 2011 in Shanghai, majoring in Biology. After graduation, he began teaching English at his hometown. Currently, he is working in a public senior high school, who has been teaching English for 7 years.

Mr. Chen currently teaches two classes, and each class contains around 40 students. This type of class is normally called a large-scale class. He has six lessons for each class and each lesson lasts for 40 minutes. There are 3 grades in public senior high school, and most teachers may not teach across grade. From Mr. Chen's perspective, he thinks that his students' English level is at an intermediate level (if the score of their exams is 100, the average might be around 70). Students are good at reading and listening but weak in speaking and writing.

5.1.1 Situations where empathy emerges

5.1.1.1 Promoting learning engagement

Teachers often empathize with students in and outside the classroom. In class, teacher empathy is mainly associated with learning. They keep on using different teaching methods to facilitate and motivate students. Emotions between teachers and students are mutually influenced, which will raise emotional reactions throughout the learning and teaching process. Therefore, emotional reactions are one major manifestation of teacher empathy and teachers may show their empathy through different ways under different circumstances.

Mr. Chen claimed that most students were less motivated in learning grammar because they think grammar rules are too boring. To deal with this situation, he began to consider how to motivate them in learning English. He frequently chatted with students after class to get to know their interest.

After class, I often talked with them about films, songs or matches they like. For instance, if we have seen the same film, I would ask them how you felt about it. They became active to discuss with me. Sometimes, we also shared good movies. Such leisure chats can enhance our relationship.

During their interaction, Mr. Chen expressed recognition, support, and empathy toward students' interest. When students felt understood and valued, they would get close to the teacher. Some essential moral values and merits, such as teacher empathy, tolerance and kindness have been accommodated into the components of teacher-relationship (Campbell, 2003). Therefore, empathy benefits bridging the distance between teachers and students.

According to their preferences, he decided to change teaching strategies and modify curriculum to improve students' learning engagement as it is necessary to perceive when students feel hard to understand the content or what activities they feel interesting or boring (Bieg et al., al, 2017; Parson et al. 2018).

Students might feel bored if the teaching approaches were always the same although the teaching content was different. I used some lyrics from English songs to teach grammar or lines from some popular American TV operas they are familiar with. This would be a quite acceptable way for them to learn grammar.

By getting to know students' favorite English songs and movies, he borrowed some lyrics or lines to support his teaching. The goal we have in cognitive empathy determine the strategies we use to understand other people (Spaulding, 2017, pp. 16). Mr. Chen implied that students might become more positive in grammar learning if he catered for their interest. This sounds like a very deep insight concerning his students' preference, thoughts, and motives, in which he was able to put himself in the students' place and understand them in a cognitive way.

5.1.1.2 Getting along with students

Teachers who demonstrate emotional empathy can communicate in ways that validate students' feelings. Empathic communication makes students feel heard and valued (Warren, 2014). When getting along with students, Mr. Chen indicated that he often regarded his students as adults although he knew they are naïve. He felt that if he could communicate with students in an adult way, students would feel respected, and they would be more willing to express themselves.

I often talked with them from an adult's perspective, although I know they are the minds of kids. Teenagers at this age always require the approval of others. They thought they are mature enough, but I know they are not.

Emotional empathy also helps teachers build a deeper connection with their students. By perceiving students' emotions, teachers can establish trust and rapport that go beyond academics (Lasky, 2005). Mr. Chen acknowledged that students are more likely to follow his instruction in English learning if they felt close to him. He emphasised that establishing a stronger relationship with students can help him reach a consensus with them on learning and easily to cope with different opinions.

Likewise, teacher empathy also plays a vital role in addressing conflicts with students. Mr. Chen noted that he preferred to talk with such students privately when he had conflicts with individual students. Before the private talk, he intended to understand the situation from those students who have a good relationship with him. He also reflected on his own and recalled whether he had said something improper that might offend the students.

If I have conflicts with a student or the student is not satisfied with me, I will ask those students who get along with me to know what has happened. I will think about what I have said in the class, for example, did I use some inappropriate words that make the student feel negative? If I have found the reasons why there were some conflicts between us, I will have a private communication with this student.

From Mr. Chen's perspective, self-reflection is essential for him as he was concerned about the students' feelings. Perceiving one's emotional reactions requires deep reflection in empathic process. 'The process of reflection is like turning the warm light of empathy inward and the process of empathy like turning the warm light of reflection outward. Reflection and empathy are two sides of the same coin (Dohrenwend, 2018, p. 1756).'

5.1.1.3 Relating to personal experience

Mr. Chen described that he might recall his memory of learning English when he taught the students who are struggled with learning. He discussed his language learning experiences with his students to make them aware that he admitted that it was difficult to learn a language. When the students had the same difficulties in learning English as him, he would share his learning strategies to help them.

I know that remembering vocabulary is the most difficult part for them. This is what I have encountered in my student hood. I told them to make the words as a jingle, which would become easier to remember.

When teachers create and maintain emotional connections with students, emotional empathy might arise through relating and feeling. Mr. Chen often unconsciously related his own learning experiences to students who had a similar suffering with him and shared his experiences. Compassionate empathy also occurred when he could feel what students felt and could not help but want to assist them.

5.1.1.4 Sharing

Apart from frequent interaction with students, teachers might communicate with their colleagues in the workplace, including those who are in the same discipline or transdisciplinary. In the English subject section, what they discuss most are daily teaching. The subject director often organizes seminars, team meetings or class evaluation to maintain the connection between them. Interaction with transdisciplinary teachers focused on cooperation that different teachers teach the same class. Through constant communication with colleagues, teacher empathy may enhance their relationships to facilitate them to complete their work.

Sharing is a crucial phase for teachers working with their colleagues. Mr. Chen stated that sharing was mainly related to English language teaching. His subject section regularly organized group meetings to share experiences, methods, and resources between English teachers, discuss learning conditions and report the course progress. The group meeting usually took place between teachers from the same grade.

We have a team meeting once a week. We were asked to make a reflection or summary about our teaching last week and prepare lessons together for the coming week. What we discussed most is about students' mistakes in English learning. For example, we summarized the grammatical errors made by students, and then found out the points where they were most likely to make mistakes, and everyone would propose their own solutions and communicate with each other.

When asking about feelings of the group meeting, his answer was very positive. He believed that he could learn a lot from his colleagues and the atmosphere made him relaxed that he was willing to express his thoughts and ideas.

Every teacher has an area of expertise in English teaching, such as vocabulary learning, listening and grammar. Our group meeting invited teachers who are better at a certain area to share their teaching methods for us to refer to and learn from. I think I can learn something new from other teachers in the group meeting and listen to how they understand and teach the same knowledge point. The team meeting makes me feel comfortable and unrestrained because I can speak out freely here.

Additionally, Mr. Chen also shared experiences and teaching approaches with those who are close to him. The private group can help to solve some difficulties as well. Positive relationships among some colleagues cannot only enhance professional growth but also provide emotional support.

If we found a good method or related materials to teach one knowledge point, we would share in the group. We also share our feelings and opinions about events happening at school. When someone had difficulties, we also provided some solutions.

Members in the small group can share valuable insights and practices to help each other grow as qualified teachers. Emotional support and understanding from colleagues can give teachers a sense of belonging. Teachers' cognitive empathy facilitates to build trust and rapport with people they are exposed to in daily work life, including students and colleagues (Lasky, 2005). From his perspective, he was very satisfied to the group meeting and actively attend discussion. He could gain help and encouragement from it.

5.1.1.5 Peer competition

Peer competition is a universal phenomenon in any profession, and teachers are also involved. Due to the examination ranking, the competitive relationship between teachers is more apparent. Colleagues' performance and behavior are also a major cause of peer competition. Mr. Chen admitted that he disliked peer competition but sometimes he was unconsciously affected.

Er, I think sometimes English teachers in my school are too competitive. For example, the morning reading starts at 7:30, but some English teachers arrive at the classroom at 7:20 and ask students to read English aloud. This made me feel like that if I did not arrive early, my students might learn English ten minutes less.

Colleagues' behavior might raise his negative emotions and impose pressure on him. He worried that if he could not arrive early, it would influence students' learning. Such competition might improve students' learning. Conversely, it is unhealthy for teachers' professional growth as they have been in stated of overloaded work and a tense atmosphere for a long time.

Furthermore, examination ranking is another factor causing peer competition and prevent teachers sharing information and resources with colleagues. Mr. Chen agreed that it is impossible for teachers to share everything.

The focus of each monthly test is different, so it is normal for test scores to fluctuate. But if there is a big gap between the test scores and other classes, I will still feel anxious. Maybe, I will pay close attention to students' learning for a period until their scores increase.

The decline of test scores is a key factor raising his anxiety. By comparing the scores with other classes, he would generate a sense of urgency, thereby posing a burden on his students. Students learning in a passive state might not be conducive to their development and might also lead to a tension between teacher and students.

Given that, he attempted to regulate his mental state and emotions.

I have made some specific plans and allocated my teaching tasks to meet students' needs. I did not want to push the students too hard either.'

Self-regulation enables him to maintain emotional resilience in challenging situations. Good emotion regulation skill makes one's experience of empathy comfortable (Thompson et al. 2019). When he can manage his own emotional state, they are better prepared to respond empathically to student' emotions and help himself get rid of negativity.

5.1.1.6 Involving parents in student learning

Mr. Chen conveyed information about students' progress and challenges in a clear and considerable manner. They kept contact with parents to update students' learning progress in a gentle way. They used language that was easily understood and considered parents' emotional responses to the information.

Chen

For example, if a student is often late for class or cannot finish homework on time; the sharp fluctuation of students' grades also needs to be noticed. I said 'Your child doesn't seem to be studying well recently. Could you help me find out what's going on with him recently?' I often reminded them not to criticize the children and asked what difficulties they have encountered instead.

Through daily observation, if a students had a behavioral problem, he would give instant feedback to the parents and attempted to know what happened. In Chinses parents' traditional conception, when they received teachers' report about their children, what they primarily to think about is their children might make mistakes at school. Some of them would blame or punish their children discriminately. Here Mr. Chen demonstrated concerns about students' feelings and suggested that parents should first understand the causes and consequences before guiding and educating their children.

5.1.2 Ecological factors affecting expressing empathy

The expression of empathy is affected by various ecological factors. These ecological factors refer to different ecological systems that influence individuals, as stated in ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These factors exist in multiple influential layers from the classroom setting to broader social and

cultural backgrounds. The following sections discuss how different ecological factors influence teachers' ability to exhibit empathy.

5.1.2.1 Belief

Teachers who believed that their roles as a friend with students may mirror their belief about the equality between teachers and students. It appears that he demonstrated empathy by establishing trust and constantly encouraging their students. For instance, Mr. Chen indicated that he often regarded his students as adults although he knew they are naïve. He felt that if he could communicate with students in an adult way, students would feel respected, and they would be more willing to express themselves.

If I communicate with them from the perspective of a friend instead of a teacher, they will be more willing to open up. Building a rapport with them allows them to better cooperate with my teaching.

His belief about the role as a friend allowed him to use empathy to build a deeper connection with their students. By perceiving students' emotions, teachers can establish trust and rapport that go beyond academics (Lasky, 2005). Mr. Chen acknowledged that students are more likely to follow his instruction in English learning if they felt close to him. He emphasized that establishing a stronger relationship with students can help him reach a consensus with them on learning and easily to cope with different opinions.

Additionally, teachers' beliefs about expressing negative emotions and teacher student power relations are relevant to students' misbehavior, which shape or impede their empathy towards students.

I am a quite strict person, so students dare not to sleep in my class, but they sometimes may become seriously distracted. As most of them are more interested in cultural lessons, few students sleep or distract.

Here he used teacher authority to deter students from sleeping in class as he believed that compulsory means could discipline them. However, his belief made him fail to know the reasons for his students' misbehavior and became less empathic with students.

5.1.2.2 Emotional experience

Emotional experience plays a central role in shaping how teachers develop, express, and regulate empathy in their professional lives. Empathy is deeply influenced by the teacher's own emotional history, day-to-day emotional climate, and capacity to process feelings. Teachers draw on their own emotional experiences to relate to students.

Mr. Chen offered help to deal with students' negative emotions. Mr. Chen was very familiar with the characteristics of students during adolescence. He described that students are rebelling and stick to their own opinions, which made them felt bored in studying and even showed resistance. To raise their interest and comfort them, he often persuaded them with emotions.

I told them I sometimes had a lower mood in working and wanted to go on strike. I said to them, 'I can understand why you less motivated in learning because it is a tormenting process, this is same as my job, but if you gave up, you would miss the chance to enter college, which might greatly influence your future life. Like me, if I quit my job, I could not earn money.

Personal experiences—whether from one’s own schooling, upbringing, or teaching career, construct teachers’ perception and responses to students’ emotions. Those who have experienced struggles, vulnerability or gained emotional support from are more likely to understand students in the similar situation. Mr. Chen compared his feelings about work to students’ studies, so that students could understand the importance of work and study, as well as their future impact. In other words, the more a teacher has reflected on and made sense of their emotional experiences, the more nuanced their empathy becomes.

Mr. Chen also had positive emotional experience with his students. For example, he expressed genuine excitement and happiness when his students succeed in the examination, from which he can achieve fulfillment as well.

I felt delighted about their success no matter they achieve with my help or others’ help. I hope they can learn English with happiness and really gain useful knowledge. At the same time, I have a sense of success because of my teaching.

Here Mr. Chen experienced enjoyment, a sense of success, and interpersonal connections with students in the work, which may lead him to sustain emotional engagement and express warmth, understanding, and patience. These positive experiences can form a feedback loop in which he regarded empathy as a source of professional meaning rather than emotional labor. Conversely, teachers who experienced negative emotional experiences, such as burnout, or high stress can raise empathy fatigue. It is difficult for teachers to maintain emotional connections with students if they overwhelmed.

5.1.2.3 Peer relationship

Teacher empathy can play an essential role in workplace bullying within educational settings. Workplace bullying may have a great influence on teachers' well-being, job satisfaction and work circumstance (Lester, 2013). Mr. Chen argued that workplace bullying was frequently seen in his school. He shared his encounters about workplace bullying and how he addressed it. When he saw younger teachers were faced with the same situation, he would relate to his experience and tend to help them.

Our school often has many exams that require teachers to invigilate on weekends. Many senior teachers used to tell me they had personal matters at home on weekends and hoped I could help them out. Thinking that everyone might have some urgent situations, I often helped them invigilate.

In the beginning, Mr. Chen was considerate and willing to help teachers who had emergencies. Empathy enables him to understand other's struggles and tend to assist. However, when he gradually perceived that some senior teachers assigned tasks to young teachers to avoid invigilation, he immediately refused and reminded other younger teachers to notice this situation.

The invigilation always occupied our weekend, and we all felt tired because we had to continue working in the coming week. I later realized that they were always coming up with various excuses to have younger teachers substitute for them during invigilation, so I started politely declining and told other younger teachers to be careful.

Empathy allows Mr. Chen to recognize early signs of workplace bullying in his colleagues by relating his previous experience. He might notice changes in behavior, emotional distress or other indicators of distress and provide support or

encourage the victim to seek assistance. He claimed that the workplace culture needed our generation to innovate so that workplace bullying can be eliminated.

The collegial relations might bring complex emotional reactions to the same event in different periods. When he first got his colleagues' request, he understood their encounters and were very willing to help them. However, He believed that senior teachers should not constantly take advantage of his kindness, and everyone should be understanding towards each other. Furthermore, emotional empathy allowed him to relate his own experiences to the new teachers and he intended to help them avoid such encounters. The change of his empathic attitudes demonstrated that empathy varied through personal experiences and the person the participant interacted with might increase or impede his expression of empathy.

5.1.2.4 Communication with parents

Since public schools teach in large classes, teachers do not have enough time and energy to attend to everyone's need. In view of this, their communication with parents is mainly based on parents' initiative. Parents ask their own questions or learn about their children's recent performance from teachers. According to the situation, Mr. Chen will provide feedback on students' learning and life based on parents' questions. He usually held regular parent-teacher conferences to report class status to parents in the class.

We generally do not proactively contact parents unless the student has a serious problem. Usually, it is the parents who take the initiative to communicate with us and learn about their children's situation. There are too many students in a class, and it is difficult for us to take care of everyone.

Moreover, when interacting with parents, he indicated that teachers cannot fulfil all the parents' needs. They sometimes encountered parents who proposed unreasonable requirements or those who cover up their children's mistake. Given this, he may refuse these parents or stop communicating with them.

There are kids in my class whose parents told lies. For example, if a child is often late for class, his parent told me that it was because the child was sick and asked me not to punish his child. For parents who lie a lot, I usually don't give them feedback about their children's situation anymore. As they cannot educate children well, teachers are quite powerless in this regard.

The misbehavior or requirements of parents led to Mr. Chen's negative emotional responses, thereby impeding the expression of teacher empathy towards them. When the parents did not cooperate with the teachers' work, he expressed indifferent and helplessness. High level of empathy might lead to positive attitude towards special students, but it does not mean teachers should blindly follow any request or meet any needs. Furthermore, he did not feel being respected and valued, he would not demonstrate empathy.

5.1.2.5 School culture

In the focus group interviews, Mr. Chen and one of his colleagues showed dissatisfaction about the working environment, where they were required to undertake some additional workload such as administrative work. They asserted that it spent their much energy that they cannot concentrate on their teaching. However, they cannot refuse such work because it was relevant to their job promotion.

Chen (Focus group)

We only have one third of time to spend on our teaching and we should undertake some non-teaching work, such as recruiting students at the beginning of the new semester. I want to devote myself to the teaching and have more time to manage and understand students, but it is impossible. That is the rule from the school. If we do not follow, we will lose opportunities to confer a professional title.

Ling (Focus group)

In the first five year in the school, the leaders required every teacher to take the position of a headteacher in a class. The headteacher of a class needs to take responsibility for a serious of chores, such as checking the student dormitory and working on night duty. Such additional work made me tired and felt annoyed. I also need to keep my phone connected all day so that the parents can contact me any time.

The impact of administrative work on teacher empathy is a critical aspect of the educational setting. When the participants were assigned too much extra work that is not relevant to the teaching, they felt disappointed, exhausted, and annoyed. Their dissatisfaction might lead to lower efficiency in daily work, which would have a negative impact on students. This finding confirms that empathy has a positive correlation with job satisfaction (Kock et al., 2019). Constrained on pressure of job promotions, they passively accepted the administrative work. Mutual misunderstanding between teachers and leaders intensifies conflicts between them, which is not only detrimental to teachers' professional growth, but also detrimental to the development of schools. Administrators need to demonstrate understanding and empathy toward teachers to reduce their job burnouts and increase job satisfactions (Greer, 2023). Likewise, teachers also need to develop empathy to support the administrators' work. If they have complains or suggestions, they can sincerely communicate with the leaders to express their thoughts and ideas.

5.1.3 The development of professional identity within empathy

The development of teachers' professional development is an ongoing dynamic process. It is not influenced by pedagogical knowledge and institutional roles, but also affected by emotions and experiences of interpersonal relationships. Among these, empathy is the core force—both the catalyst and framework, through which teachers can understand who they are, what they pay attention to and how to build relationships with others in their professional roles.

Mr. Chen described their transition from novice to apprentice teachers, highlighting the struggles he faced at the beginning of their careers. He experienced negative emotions and frequently questioned their suitability for the teaching profession. During this novice stage, his professional identities were still underdeveloped and fragile.

At the beginning of my career life, I was often influenced by students' emotions such as pressure and anxiety. About the teaching, I often felt puzzled. This is because I was just a green hand, and I was not sure whether I could be competent for this job.

He then particularly mentioned his feelings about the first time when he stood in front of the students.

I felt very nervous probably because that was the first time I was faced with many students. Before the class, I did not know how the students would response to the class, and even I did not know whether the teaching content would meet their English level. Our school divided the class randomly, so their levels of English were uneven.

When Mr. Chen had his first class, many unknown factors made him nervous and overwhelmed. As a novice teacher, he needed a period time to adapt to the new circumstance and get acquainted with his students. Such uncertainty has led him to suspect whether he was capable of this job.

His experience of empathy with students was about how he was influenced by students' emotions and how he regulated his emotions by himself. He admitted that he was frequently influenced by students' emotions at the beginning of his career life. Teaching is an emotional process, in which emotions of teachers and students are mutually influenced, called emotion contagion. The emotion contagion is often regarded as 'emotional empathy' that subjectively reflects others' feeling state (Hatfield, et al., 2009). Novice teachers are easily to be influenced by students' behavior and emotions especially negative emotions, and so did Mr. Chen.

From Mr. Chen's experience as a novice teacher, it can be identified that he developed many negative emotions such as anxiety, pressure, confusion, and nervousness, all of which has led him to become lack of confident. As novice teachers, he had limited teaching cognition and experience, leading to restlessness in unfamiliar environments. He often suffered from negative emotions such as confusion, frustration, and worry, which fueled self-doubt. This emotional dissonance may have resulted in stress and vulnerability, impacting their self-perception, evaluation, and identity (Zembylas, 2003). He faced an identity crisis, unsure of their competence for the role.

After he had been teaching for a period, the influence of emotions from students reduced. He tried to moderate his emotional states and felt less anxious about

students' grades as he discovered that there might be different reasons for poor academic performance.

I may become less affected by them, and then I realized that not all students are good at subjects related to languages. They may not perform very well either in English or Chinese subjects. However, they are more likely to be good at science such as mathematics, chemistry, or physics. Despite this, I also reflected on my teaching and tried to make my class attractive and interesting.

To address vulnerability and identity challenges, he engaged in reflective practices. Reflection plays a crucial role in shaping teacher identity, offering opportunities to analyze teaching practices, understand strengths and weaknesses, and develop deep self-awareness of their professional roles. Through reflective practice, teachers can examine their beliefs, values, and motivations, continually constructing and reconstructing their identities based on evolving experiences and self-assessment (Protassova et al., 2021). Alongside reflection, he also learned to manage his emotions and overcome negative feelings independently.

Getting through the beginner teacher phase, Mr. Chen realized the importance of exchanging and sharing experiences with colleagues. He began to frequently communicate with them and asked for help when he needed.

We often communicate with each other about teaching methods and students' status. For example, if we find a good approach to solve some difficult teaching problems, we will share in our teams. I think mutual communication and support are helpful to promote our teaching quality.

Mr. Chen believed that communicating with colleagues about teaching and student situations can help them learn from each other and make up for their shortcomings,

which benefits his teaching progress. As he became more familiar with teaching, he was assigned other tasks irrelevant to teaching.

I really don't want to stay in this school any longer, because our school often requires teachers to do outdoor publicity when recruiting students, such as handing out flyers or making phone calls. I don't think this should be a teacher's job.

He believed that the essential job of a teacher is teaching, and some other tasks arranged by the school conflicted with his personal concept of teachers. Under this circumstance, he suspected whether he should continue current professions. He encountered identity conflicts at this stage (the contradiction between self-conception and the actual identity).

Finally, Mr. Chen talked about his perceptions of teachers' role during his career and his attitudes towards teacher this profession.

At the beginning of my career life, I think I am the one who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts. After the development of educational reform, I believe that a teacher is more likely a guide. Most of the time, indeed, I hope I could inspire the students. For example, when I teach one knowledge point, they can draw inferences about other cases from one instance rather than rote memorization in every linguistic point. If they keep on remembering everything without consideration, it may also have a negative impact on learning other subjects. I think good learning strategies can be adopted in any subject. Reciting simply may also influence their further learning and development. After class, I treat 'teacher' as a job that I should undertake more social responsibilities. As we cultivate teenagers, we should be more caring, patient and empathic.

Here Mr. Chen stated that he would devote all his energy to teaching in early years, and how to teach academic knowledge well was his focus. With the continuous

accumulation of teaching experience, he turned his focus to students and began to constantly look for and try different teaching methods to improve students' enthusiasm for learning English. Now, he gradually realized that teachers are given social responsibilities, not only to teach but also to educate. At the same time, due to the particularity of adolescents, teachers should adjust themselves according to the characteristics of students of this age group and pay attention to their mental health and future development. This series of changes shows that he has changed from knowledge-oriented to student-centered and pays more attention to the emotional connection with students. Therefore, in the process of teaching, teachers' professional identity will change with the changes in emotional experience. When they begin to pay attention to their own emotions, students' emotions, and the emotional relationship between teachers and students, they will continue to make themselves a comprehensive teacher to meet the needs of teaching and students.

5.2 Case 2: Ms. Jia (an Experienced Private-institution Teacher)

Ms. Jia is running a studio to teach English, and she has been teaching for around 7 to 8 years as a private teacher. In her first two years of teaching, she worked in a private institution. Then she went back her hometown and rent a flat to start a studio. Her studio closed for almost one year because she continued her master in the UK to study TESOL. After graduation, she reopened her studio again and the number of her students has significantly increased. At the beginning of her studio, she only taught one-to-one class, and now she has some small-scale classes from Grade 1 to Grade 3 from senior high school. She divided her classes into three levels according to students' examination scores. She explained that the credit system is more effective for her teaching. If there were excellent students or extremely bad students (just based on the grades), she recommended them to take one-to-one class.

5.2.1 Situations where empathy emerged

5.2.1.1 Understanding and mediating students' mentality

The participant teachers claim that students' status is essential for their learning efficiency. When they are in poor condition, they cannot concentrate on the lessons and easily distract. The teachers acknowledged that resolving mental problems is the priority to engage students in English learning. In the following extract from the focus group session, three participants discussed how they perceived students were out of form, what they have done to adjust students' mental attitude.

Liu (Focus group)

I particularly notice students' status through my observation. When they had a bad mentality, they cannot listen to anything in class. I can also capture their status when they made a phone call to me.

Jia (Focus group)

If they were not in good condition, it would show in class. For example, their accuracy in dictation significantly declined, or failed to fully understand the grammar knowledge point.

Zou (Focus group)

It is easy to capture their states according to their behavior, particularly those who perform actively in class. When they become silent, I can realize they might meet some difficulties.

In accordance with the data analysis, the participants argued that their observation and interpretation of students' behaviors, such as facial expressions, body languages, and non-verbal reactions, allowed them to identify when students had problems or became less engaged in class. For example, Ms. Zou checked whether students were engaged or not through their degree of reactions to the class, while Ms. Jia judged students' learning status through their mastery of knowledge, such as the correct rate of doing exercises. Ms. Liu emphasized the importance of observing students and expressed confidence in accurately interpreting their non-verbal cues. They believed that the process of observation and interpretation was instrumental in helping them to make professional judgements that enhanced language learning.

Notably, the participants showed more concerns on students who were not in good condition in class. They were sensitive to students' social, emotional, and academic needs and strived to provide proper support and assistance.

Jia (Focus group)

If I found a student with a bad state, I would have a casual chat with him/her in during the break of class. We talked about the music he/she liked or ordered a food delivery to help him/her jump out of this situation first.

Zou (Focus group)

I would have a spiritual communication with the student after class. I said, 'you are very active at ordinary times, but why you look so depressed today? What has happened?'

The emergency of empathy allows the participants to understand the potential emotions, motivation, and views that drives students' behavior. After interpreting students' behavior through an empathic lens, both participants chose to communicate with the students who seemed in a different state, which is a direct and effective way to understand their thoughts and feelings. In terms of the understanding, they employed appropriate means to mediate students' mentality.

5.2.1.2 Indirect error correction

Teacher empathy can play a pivotal role in error correction in the classroom. To model acceptance of errors, the participant teachers first considered how students felt about their mistakes and what way is appropriate for error correction. Ms. Jia aimed to raise students' awareness of values of mistakes and achieve self-correction. Here is the interpretation of how teacher empathy can influence the process of error correction.

When I taught a grammar points, I first gave the structure about a simple sentence: S+V+O (subject+ verb + object), and asked students to make their own sentences based on the give structure. When I found some students made the same mistake about the sentence like this 'I buy book', I wrote a similar sentence on the blackboard "I eat apple' and asked students to check their sentences and pointed out the mistake of the sampling sentence.

She explained that students might feel unhappy if she directly pointed out their mistakes in class. This is because they felt like losing face in a whole class. Cognitive empathy allows her to understand students' perspectives, including their feelings and reactions and feelings. Considering students' feelings in the process of error correction, she acknowledged their efforts and emotion and avoided actions that might make them discouraged or embarrassed.

As her class-scale is small, she often walks through the classroom to check everyone's exercises and reminded them stealthily. Here cognitive empathy enables Ms. Jia to consider different causes for students' mistakes. Therefore, she tailored her feedback to their unique needs and offered individualized support and guidance. After one-by-one correction, she summarized the common mistakes by writing down a similar wrong sentence on the blackboard to initiate students to correct it by themselves. It seems that she intended to help students achieve self-correction through analogical transfer. By doing so, students can have a better understanding of the grammatical point and learn from their mistakes.

5.2.1.3 Relating personal experiences and feelings

The participant teacher believed that they could relate to their students if they had similar experiences or feelings with them. The data analysis indicated that the participants associated their ability to empathize with students with their personal professional experiences. Ms. Jia believed her experience as a language learner could help her relate to the challenges that her students encountered in English learning.

I told them remembering vocabulary is the most struggling process for every English learner, even I was in my high school. I also had a bad memory in remembering new words. I think remembering words by rote is a waste of time and lower efficient, so I suggested them to use some rules. For example, we can use

the pronunciation rules to remember words. We classify the similar pronounced words into a category. Through phonetic symbols, we can spell these words.

Ms. Jia's experiences of learning English contributed to her teaching approaches and helped her identify with her students. She first discussed her learning experiences and made students realized her acknowledgement of the difficulties of remembering words. It is because of her struggles in memorizing English words that prompted her to seek solutions to deal with. She wanted students to know she had been in a similar situation and was able to help them overcome the difficulties. When students felt the teacher stood with them in the same place, they tended to trust the teachers and accept their teaching methods.

5.2.1.4 Being attentive to the family context

Ms. Jia agreed that students' academic performance is relevant to their family atmospheres. She acknowledged the unique dynamics, values, and priorities of each family, and communicated with parents in a respectful way. She needed to understand students' diverse family contexts so that they could make targeted strategies and decisions.

Ms. Jia particularly concerned about students' family financial status as it affected the teaching strategies she employed. She explained that the goals and requirements were different for students from rich families and lower income families. She also developed different emotions when teaching students from diverse family backgrounds.

Some parents directly told me that we hope our children to study happily and not to push them. Only if they have interest in English learning, their happiness is more crucial. Frankly speaking, these students have a rich family, and their parents have already well planned for their future. Most of these students are not hardworking. They only come to the class and never finish homework and review the lessons. Their parents said that they did not require their children to make a great progress, and keeping current grades is enough. In this case, I pay more attention to happy education. I no longer pushed such students to work hard. My class is full of delight, and I allocate some simple tasks for them to complete.

After communicating with parents, Ms. Jia conducted her teaching according to parents' requirements. When she perceived children from rich family had been planned by their parents, she did not set a difficult learning goal for them to achieve. The basic request from parents made her class relaxed as well as herself. She felt delighted that she could achieve happy education. However, she stated that she needed to employ different approaches to teach those from a lower income family since these parents were goal-oriented and imposed burden on her, which made her felt anxious and stressful.

Interestingly, I found that these students are quite silent and not good at expressing themselves. They seemed conscientious in learning, but it is just an outward appearance. Indeed, they were impetuous and cannot calm down in learning. They never felt happy in learning. If so, they often remember knowledge points with nervousness, anxiety, and depression. All their negative emotions were originated from their parents. This is why they can only remember few things. I tried to become gentle and speak softly when teaching them. Most of time, I encouraged them a lot in my class and made them full of enthusiasm for the future. I told them knowledge needs to be gradually accumulated and all you need to do is to make a little progress every time. My purpose is to reduce their anxiety and stress. I do not want to see they afford too much in learning.

Through Ms. Jia's observation and experiences, she was sensitive to challenges and stress families were faced with, including economic-status, healthy issues and family disrupted. She analyzed the common phenomenon of students from lower-income family and pointed out the causes for their non-ideal academic

performances. Family may encounter a series of challenges that influences students' well-being and learning. (Soutter et al., 2014). She discovered that the family context was the primary source of students' upset, and she worried about it had a negative impact on their learning motivation. By understanding their status, she strived to encourage such students and engage them a bright future to reduce their mental burdens.

5.2.1.5 Emotional influences from parents

Teachers from private institutions are prone to being influenced by parents because of their different requirements on students' learning outcomes. As parents pay spend extra money on the lessons, they expect their children can get progress. Specifically, those parents whose children had poor grades are more likely to demonstrate negative emotions. The participant teachers admitted that sometimes they felt anxious and stressful because of parents' performance, but they were able to manage their emotions and regulate themselves in the best status.

Li (Focus group)

Their anxiety might influence me. They felt anxious because they hoped that their children could get a huge progress by attending a few lessons. Although I can understand them, it is hard to achieve their goals, which would impose a burden on myself.

Jia (Focus group)

Some parents had a specific requirement. They hoped to spend less money but requested a great progress in the examination in a short time. I understand their situation, but I still felt too stressful when I taught these students. Undoubtedly, such pressure would transfer to the students as well.

Both participants indicated that they were unconsciously involved in such negative emotions when they communicated with parents. Although they could understand parents' requirements and the family context, they still taught under a huge pressure. This might not be beneficial for themselves and students. By perceiving that they raised negative emotions, they could regulate themselves in a short time as they believed that they should set a positive image in teaching and mask negative emotions. Teachers who possess profound empathy sometimes mask their negative emotions for students' or parents' benefit (Cooper, 2011). This includes they need to express interest although they do not feel interested indeed. Sometimes, parents may present very negative feelings. Even though teachers have felt uncomfortable, they still control themselves to consider how to improve the relationship and learning.

Jia (Focus group)

But soon, I would be self-regulated. I wanted to know the reasons for their worry and anxiety and find solutions to them. I need to hide my negative emotions, and I must show a positive attitude toward them and encourage them. I cannot be more anxious than them.

Li (Focus group)

If I had this emotion, I would stop the interaction. I need a space to reflect on myself and change my mood. I try to think about the problem from another angle. When I go back to normal, I will talk to the parents again and rationally analyze the problems we have.

The participant teachers explained the process of their self-regulation. They admitted the role of managing emotions in interacting with the parents. They gained emotional contagion from parents and used empathy to cope with its impact. Empathy needs emotional regulation to prevent emotional drowning from

others. Likewise, self-regulation allows individuals to manage their emotional responses when empathizing with others, ensuring that they can provide appropriate support and assistance in case of emotional overwhelmed (Harvey & Macklem, 2009).

5.2.2 Ecological factors affecting empathy

5.2.2.1 Autonomy

In the complex dynamic model of autonomy development, Borges (2022) proposed that it contained the correlation between autonomy and empathy in language teaching in the affective subsystem. Both autonomy and empathy are dynamic skills related to the context, which can be cultivated and developed in the whole life (Krznic, 2014; Mercer, 2016). For this aspect, autonomy and empathy are regarded as a closely interconnected structure in learning and teaching since they require teachers to respect students' learning process and understand their decision on practicing autonomy in and beyond the classroom (Borges & Castro, 2022). Therefore, teacher empathy might vary from their autonomy in class, leading to new behavioral patterns. The following extracts from interviews reveal that how autonomy influences teachers' empathy towards students.

Ms. Jia described the changes of her focus on students in a certain period of teaching. Her direction transformed from exam-oriented to mental concerns. She realized the importance of focusing on students' mental health and changed her teaching strategies to meet students' needs.

After I had taught for two years, I realized that helping students to achieve good academic performance was not only 'duck-stuffing' but needed to pay more attention to their mental state. I changed my teaching strategies and tried other ways to teach them. For example, I did not require them remember too many words. I asked them to do translating exercises with some interesting articles. I hope they could gain happiness through translation and learn some English words.

Autonomy empowers teachers to act in ways that aligns with their values, including the ability to perceive and react to students' emotional needs. Teachers with a strong sense of autonomy are more likely to express authentic and personalized ways. Recognizing students' mental states, Ms. Jia began to adopt discipline approaches to motivate them. She hoped that students can obtain enjoyment while learning new knowledge, which means that she placed emphasis on students' mental health. In contrast, if a teacher prioritized test scores or rigid outcomes over student well-being, she might lack autonomy and suppresses empathic expression. This can lead to emotional dissonance, where a teacher feels empathy but cannot act on it.

Teacher empathy involves not just feeling with students, but also acting with emotional intelligence. Ms. Jia narrated how she managed her own emotions to change students' learning attitudes.

Currently, my emotional state has become stable, and I am not easily out of temper. The most important thing for me is to change students' learning attitude and make them happy to take my lessons. Once they are willing to my class, it may mirror that they are interested in English learning. I think I need to tell them to take it easy in learning and make them enjoy the learning process.

Autonomy allows teachers to self-regulate emotions in ways that support both the teacher and students. This emotional agency is crucial to sustaining empathy over time and avoiding burnout. When Ms. Jia practiced empathy with herself, she approached her emotions with understanding and kindness. This self-compassion can be a powerful tool for self-regulation because it enables her to soothe and comfort herself. A steady emotional state can also help her become more rational and objective to cope with students' emotional reactions, employing appropriate methods to enhance their learning interests.

5.2.2.2 Self-reflection

It has been proved that self-reflection plays an important role in enhancing teacher empathy by increasing self-awareness, recognizing stimulus of emotions, scanning interaction with students, developing empathic listening, enhancing empathy towards students, and promoting continuous improvement on empathic teaching practice. (Morin, 2020). The following data analysis presents that Ms. Jia raised reflections in different aspects in the teaching practice.

I felt very worried when they had difficulties. They showed worry in learning, and I felt what they felt. I worried about the bad emotions may negatively affect their learning. If they felt anxious, I would be included as well.

But soon, I adjusted myself. I wanted to know the reasons for their worry and anxiety and find solutions to them. I need to hide my negative emotions, and I must show a positive attitude toward them and encourage them. I cannot be more anxious than them.

Empathy starts with emotional awareness of oneself. Ms. Jia realized that her negative emotions raised by students' learning struggles influenced her teaching and states, and she attempted to moderate herself. Reflecting on own emotion can better differentiate her feelings from those from students, facilitating to avoid emotional projection—assuming students feel what the teacher feels. When she recognized that her anxiety and worries derived from herself rather than students' behavior, she made more empathic responses to encourage students.

5.2.2.3 Influences from parents

Ms. Jia indicated that she often attempted to fulfill parents' expectations and requirements although they sometime worked under huge pressure. She described that parents proposed their request before they decided their children

to enroll the class and changed their requirements overtime according to their children's performance.

I am seriously concerned the parents' comments and feedback because my teaching strategies sometimes are adjusted with their expectation, specifically for those high-demanded parents. They hoped their children could be quickly improved. Sometimes, I felt stressful because I was afraid that I could not fulfil their needs.

It appears that parents expected teachers to exhibit qualities of teaching competence to facilitate students' academic success. By recognizing their demands and expectations, Ms. Jia tailored her instrumental strategies to foster students' academic achievement. The alignment between teacher empathy and parents' expectations contributes to a holistic approach to education that prioritizes well-being alongside academic success. Teachers and parents are mutually achieved. Teachers can gain a sense of achievements once they complete parents' requirements, while parents feel satisfied as their expectations have been met.

5.2.2.4 Economic issues

Private institutions, known as revenue-producing organizations, mainly pursuit economic benefit, which also influences teachers' values who regard personal profits as the primary goal. As their incomes depend on the number of students they teach, they may do whatever it takes to cater to students and parents, which is not truly about attending to students' needs.

I must try my best to meet parents' requirements or follow their opinions. I need to keep contact with them to build a close relationship so that they can allow their children to continue learning with me. Of course, I should guarantee my teaching quality.

Here Ms. Jia purposefully display their empathy to fulfill demands from students and parents, which reveals the dual nature of empathy that can be used for positive intentions or deceptive purposes. Empathy is a complex emotion. Although it often associates with positive intentions like compassion and understanding, it can be also used as deception. Some people may utilize empathy to manipulate or deceive others by getting their trust for personal gain (Bubandt, & Willerslev, 2015).

5.2.3 The development of professional identity within empathy

Empathy plays a fundamental and transformative role in constructing and reconstructing teacher professional identity. Empathy is not only interpersonal skills but also a power of emotion, morality and reflection, deeply affecting how teachers recognize themselves, their roles and relationships with others in the ecological educational setting.

For novice teachers, empathy can help define what kind of a teacher they want to be. In the early stage of teaching, they fill with uncertain and strong emotions, while empathy is the support of morality and emotion. Ms. Jia described that how her emotional states changed over time (from her first class to teaching for a short period).

At the beginning of my career, I often felt that I did not know what to do. I felt anxious and worried the students' grades if they had limited vocabulary. Gradually, I became open-minded when I faced such students. I changed my teaching strategies and tried other ways to teach them.

When she perceived her negative emotions derived from students learning, she started to reflect on her teaching pedagogies and tried to understand what students really needed. Here empathy allowed her to understand her students first and

offered appropriate teaching styles. Empathy also encouraged her to construct identity as caring, responding, and student-centeredness. She no longer only regarded her as an instructor to impart knowledge but a guide, mentors and nurturers, forming an identity aligned with relational teaching values.

However, Ms. Jia often encountered conflicts of expectations at the stage of a newly coming teacher. The conflict was between her ideals and realities. She was struggled with disciplinary roles and caring roles.

I was once believed that teachers should meet students' needs and concerned about their specific situations. However, if I acted too kindly or friendly, students might think I was easy to talk and would not complete their homework.

Here she expected to understand and fulfill students' needs and thought about that she was a caring teacher, but the fact was that students might not follow her rules. At this stage, she could not understand that being a strict teacher and caring for students were not in conflict. When integrating empathy into practices, even within structural limitations, teachers can also maintain realities and reduce identity imbalance. She initially focused on discipline might shift toward a nurturing identity after understanding a student's emotional background through empathic interaction.

For example, I did not require them remember too many words. I asked them to do translating exercises with some interesting articles. I hope they could gain happiness through translation and learn some English word.

Another key change of Ms. Jia' professional identity was followed by reflections on herself, and she knew how to manage her emotions.

I worried about the bad emotions may negatively affect their learning. If they felt anxious, I would be included as well. My emotional state has become stable, and I am not easily out of temper. The most important thing for me is to change students' learning attitude and make them happy to take my lessons. Once they are willing to my class, it may mirror that they are interested in English learning. I think I need to tell them to take it easy in learning and make them enjoy the learning process

Empathy often involves perspective-taking and emotional resonance, which can naturally raise critical reflections—a core element of identity development. When Ms. Jia created empathy to her students, she reassessed her beliefs, values, and practice, thereby reconstructing or improving her professional identity. This reflective process may lead to the shift of identity, particularly when teachers are faced with emotional dilemmas, cultural differences, or student struggle. This is also a sign of her transformation from a novice teacher to an experienced teacher.

Empathy plays a nuanced and evolutionary role in professional identity of experienced teachers. Compared with novice teachers, they often embed empathy in their sense of identity in teaching, and making more targeted, balanced and strategic reflections. For instance, when Ms. Jia faced students' disruptive behavior, she recognized it as a sign of emotional distress rather than disobedience, adopting supportive interventions instead of punishment.

I remembered a student who usually performed well in class was distracted and not paying attention that day. I thought she was tired that day and was absent-minded. But two weeks later, she was still like this. I talked to her alone and found out that her family conflict caused her recent emotional breakdown. I kept comforting her and told her not to let the relationship between her parents continue to affect her state. If she had any difficulties, teachers and classmates would help her.

With years of practice, Ms. Jia typically moved beyond spontaneous emotional responses to develop measured, reflective empathic reactions. Empathy became

a refined aspect of her professional toolkit, facilitating her to meet students' demands without compromising their own emotional boundaries. This professionalized empathy reinforces an identity rooted in emotional intelligence, maturity, and adaptability.

Experienced teachers often suffer from emotional labor, burnout, and role conflict, including Ms. Jia. After many years of practices, she can build a health emotional boundary, allowing her to show empathy without becoming emotionally depleted.

When I felt stressed and tired at work, I usually tried to find ways to relax myself. For example, I did some outdoor sports. Changing the environment could change my mood. I also chatted with friends to prevent internal friction.

Here Ms. Jia found proper ways to regulate herself to avoid the burden of negative emotions. Empathy helped her with emotional regulation and can be transformed into a source of professional resilience. It is not just a reaction but a regular, sustainable practice. This emotional balance helps build a stronger, more lasting professional identity that is built on emotional intelligence and self-compassion.

Chapter 6: Cross-case Analysis

This chapter presents a cross-case analysis of how empathy is expressed and integrated into the professional practices and identities of experienced language teachers in two distinct educational settings: Chinese public secondary schools and private tutoring institutions. Building on the individual case studies presented in previous chapters, this section seeks to identify both common patterns and contextual distinctions in empathic engagement, focusing on multiple layers of teacher interaction—including those with students, colleagues, parents, and family members.

6.1 Situations where empathy emerges in experienced teachers from public schools

6.1.1 Teacher-student Interaction

6.1.1.1 Perceiving and responding to students' negative feelings

Students are more likely to raise negative feelings when they encounter academic struggles or personal challenges, which might evoke teachers' empathy to facilitate them to overcome these adversities. The participant teachers acknowledged that they attempted to help students when they discovered students who were struggled with their learning. They expressed concerns and compassion and employed different strategies to support and encourage these students. They holistically evaluated students' learning situation and allocated appropriate learning tasks students can complete according to students' English level. For those with poor academic performance, they reduced the difficulty and quantity of learning tasks so that students could easily gain a sense of achievement and build confidence in English learning. Below are the interview extracts to illustrate the approaches they adopted to help academically struggled students.

Ling

When I saw some students perform poorly in the examination, I comforted them and told them that everyone's language talent is different, and you did not need to feel stressful from those gifted classmates. I also arranged some easy tasks for them and asked them to answer some simple questions in class and then praised them.

By realizing the source of students' negative emotions, Ms. Ling firstly provided positive emotional feedback and made them felt reassured. She reduced the difficulty of assignments and encouraged students in class, which could help them build confidence. Likewise, Ms. Wang used stratified teaching in class to address the problems of poorly performed students.

Wang

Generally, most students need to do reading exercise for 30 minutes in one class. For struggled students, if they are unable to reach the requirement, their reading time can decline. Averagely, students should complete ten questions, but I think it is enough if these specific students could complete five with quality.

To deal with academic difficulties, Ms. Wang believed the priority was to address these students' psychological discrepancy in completing learning tasks. Students could gain a sense of self-fulfillment within their competence and have confidence to continue the following learning tasks. Through progressive exercise, they would get improvement. Both Ms. Ling and Ms. Wang emphasized that it was their responsibility to foster positive emotions and cultivate students' positive attitudes toward learning.

Beyond academic challenges, teachers also showed empathy when students faced personal difficulties. They frequently expressed concern and offered

support. Ms. Xiong mentioned that she would communicate with students who were displaying negative emotions.

Xiong

If I found that some talkative and outgoing students were in bad moods, I would communicate with them directly and try to get what problems they had encountered, such as family problems or emotional problems. If they were willing to speak out, it meant that the negative emotions might not have a great impact on them. However, for those who are introverted or cautious, I needed to first understand the situation from other students, and then talk to them specifically.

Ms. Zhai shared a story about how she helped her students to solve family conflicts. When she sensed a student is struggling emotionally, she would have a private talk with the students or listen to him/her.

Zhai

One of my students had a quarrel with his elder sister, and his sister disclosed his bad behavior in our on-line class chat group. I particularly concerned about the emotional change of this student in the following days. I found he was in low spirits and absent-minded in learning. I asked him to come to my office. When he stepped into the office, I did not say any words but gave him a hug. His tears instantly flowed down. He said, 'I think you will blame me and laugh at me.' I immediately comforted him and said, 'I just want to know what happened to you.' Then, we had a deep chat.

Ms. Zhai responded with care and understanding, taking appropriate action to support the student. She realized he had been bottling up emotions for some time and needed to release them. This example highlights how empathy enables teachers to stand in their students' shoes, analyze the root of their problems, and find ways to help them overcome challenges.

6.1.1.2 Resolving conflicts with sincere communication

Conflicts between teachers and students are common, but empathic teachers often resolve these conflicts peacefully, easing tension. Private conversations are a direct way to address conflicts, allowing teachers to understand students' situations, thoughts, and emotions. For example, Ms. Xiong highlighted communication as a direct and effective way to resolve conflicts. She shared a situation where she initially reacted with anger, which escalated the conflict, but later resolved it through respectful dialogue.

Xiong

I remembered a student asked for leaving during the class, but I refused. However, she insisted to do so without my permission. I felt very angry at that moment and criticized her. After we all calmed down a few days later, the students came to apologize for me. I sincerely told her, 'If you had emergency, you should give me some reasonable excuses because it was the class time. I know you are used to be a polite student at school. But you need to know that if everyone did what you did, it is difficult for me to manage the classroom. I hope we can respect each other.' Actually, students in adolescence are more likely to be impulsive. As long as you understand, respect, and listen to them, almost all the conflicts can be solved.

Ms. Xiong highlighted the significant role of respect in the teacher-student relationship. The differences between classroom members are the situation that teachers confront with in daily work. However, these differences can be understood through different ways. Another important trait of Ms. Xiong is that she held an empathic attitude toward the student, which enabled her to understand the student's views and situations rather than adjust it from her perspective.

Interestingly, Ms. Zhai indicated that she often connected with her son when she intended to blame a student who made mistakes. She substituted the role of a mother and imagined if her son was faced with the same encounters. Empathizing with the same situation enables her to share the students' experience with her son, which leads to a change in treating the students.

Zhai

When I wanted to criticize the student or manage conflicts, my son often came to my mind. I imagined that if my son had made a mistake at school, I hoped he could be treated gently. My expectation of my son often reminded me to be tolerant and kind to my students although they made mistake. Some punishments have been taken as I need to teach them to pay for their errors, but I am not so serious and direct as before. Before I corrected them, I would ask what happened first to get to know their situations.

Ms. Zhai raised complex emotions during the process of managing conflicts, such as anger, regret and tolerant. Her emotions were changed with her identity. She stood on a mother's perspective to treat her students, which made her responded students' mistakes with tolerance and kindness. More importantly, she did not forget her identity as a teacher, who are responsible to lead student to a right direction.

6.1.1.3 Reducing emotional contagion through self-regulation

Teaching is an emotional process, in which emotions of teachers and students are mutually influenced, called emotion contagion. As all the participants are experienced teachers, they indicated that they are now less influenced by students. If so, they would try to control their emotions or regulate their status. Whether they suffered emotional contagion from students depends on the scenarios they were exposed to. Some teachers illustrated that they would not feel bad for students' test results but their less motivation or negative attitudes towards learning.

Wang

If my students were uncooperative in class or show a learning-weariness mind, I would feel distressed. I think they are too young to know appreciation and feel anxious and worry about their future. However, I cannot let this bad situation continue. I will adjust myself first and pull myself out of the sad mood. I calmly think about what the problem is: could it be that the content of my course is too difficult, or perhaps the students have some troubles, such as family problems?

Ms. Wang reacted to students' resistance in learning with distress, anxiety, and worries. It seems that she would fall into a negative state if the students did the same. Likewise, Ms. Ling argued that when saw a less motivated student in class, she felt regretful, but sometimes she would reflect whether her teacher methods were suitable for the students. She described the change in her mood from intense to calm when she was confronted with the same situation for many times, and she can better manage her emotions now.

Ling

It is really hating iron that do not expect too much frequently when I saw some students still badly behaved below the belt. Of course, I will think about my teaching methods. But at the beginning of my career, I felt very annoyed when I heard a student said, 'I am a Chinese, why do I have to learn English?' and now I can understand them. It is perhaps a mind change after I saw many students like him. I tried to reconcile with myself as well as understand their perspective. It is true that most of them may not use English after the entering college examination. It is reasonable for them to have these thoughts in learning English.

Ms. Ling was exasperated at students' resistance and less cooperation in English learning at her early career life. As these students' behavior was not meet her expectation, she would feel sense of disparity. Furthermore, if students display negative attitude and emotions, the teacher will also react negatively, such as

annoyance and disappointment. This is because she lacked inclusion to accept the uniqueness of some students. However, when this phenomenon frequently occurred, she began to think about the causes and attempted to take the students' perspective. The emergence of empathy influences her emotional reaction to expectation. When individuals are empathic, they are more likely to understand the emotional influence of unmet expectations on others. Responding empathically can also help alleviate disappointment, frustration, or other negative emotions that may arise when expectations are not met.

As emotional empathy can lead to experiencing intense emotions similar to those of others, both Mr. Wang and Ms. Ling were infected by students' negative status and emotions, which evoked their negative response. Such strong emotional reactions might hinder effective decision-making or action and cause emotional exhaustion because of constant exposure to others' emotional experiences. Therefore, teachers need to acquire the skill of self-regulation, which can help them manage their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations, especially in challenging or emotionally charged circumstances.

If teachers can manage their emotional reactions well and become less influential of students, their empathic responses will be constructive and align with the context. It is important to note that the impact of emotional empathy might differ in terms of individual differences, backgrounds, and experiences. Here are the examples of three participant teachers present their views and feelings about students' failure in examinations.

Zhai (Focus group)

I am less influenced by the decline of examination scores, but students will be greatly involved. If the phenomenon occurs in the whole class, I firstly reflect myself and find out the reasons for the failure. I will hold a class meeting to discuss and summarize the examination and encourage them not to feel so bad. As for individual students, I will find a proper time to talk with them. Through my experience, the most influential factors for emotional fluctuation are games and personal emotions with friends.

Wang (Focus group)

I think I can better control my emotions, and I may not bring emotions into students' academic failure. As for the problems of examinations, I often analyze which mistakes made by most students, and which mistakes belong to a few students.

For very few students, I will observe them for a period to see their changes in recent learning attitude. If they continue to be in a bad state, I will talk to them alone and to know what happened.

Here Ms. Zhai and Ms. Wang demonstrated that they did not feel bad for the poor test results. Instead, they maintained a calm attitude and made a comprehensive analysis on the test paper. Since they have been teaching English for twenty years, it is frequent to see the fluctuation of students' academic performance, which allows them to assess various situations objectively, and regulate their responses based on a broader understanding. It seems that they can realize when and how to properly express empathy to assist students and keep personal well-being.

6.1.2 Teacher-colleague interaction

6.1.2.1 Sharing

The participant teachers frequently communicated with each other about student issues. They exchanged information that might promote a comprehension of their students. When they had similar experiences with their colleagues, they can empathize with each other and provide constructive advice to those who are confronted with the same challenges. Teachers need open conversation to express

emotions and communicate feelings. Mutual openness can help them make explicit and transparent decisions and keep calm.

Wang

We communicate with each other about how to educate students and share our experiences and feelings about getting along with students. Such sharing may raise our sense of substitution into that scene. I would recall how I solved these issues and imagined if I were them, what I would do. In the process of discussing students' situations, we can have a profound understanding of students as each teacher can only see an aspect of students. If we can integrate our information, we can resolve some problems from students.

Although Ms. Wang did not directly participant in some scenarios, she could envision the perspectives, emotions, and experiences of others. Listening to colleagues sharing stories stimulated her to put herself into others' shoes and imagine what it be like to be in another one's situation, fostering understanding and empathy. Imagination and empathy the interconnected process that reciprocally enhance each other. Imagination enables individuals to mentally imitate and understand others' experiences and viewpoints, thereby enhancing empathic understanding, connection, and compassion.

Furthermore, through communication with colleagues, Ms. Wang acknowledged that no one can thoroughly understand every aspect of their students. Empathy can enhance self-awareness by encouraging self-reflection and recognizing personal emotions, advantages, weakness, and biases. Therefore, teachers need information exchange to discover their blind spots and better assist students. Understanding others' experiences and views can provide valuable perspectives on individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Similarly, Mr. Chen proposed the same viewpoints about relating his experiences to others'. When inquiring students' situations, Mr. Chen resonated with his colleagues if they had the same experience.

Chen

If I met a troublesome student in my class in Year 2, I would ask his/her previous teachers to ask for information. If other teachers had the same encounters as me, it proved that it was not my problem. From what they said, I can feel what their previous experience was like and how they felt in such situations.

Emotional empathy has been evoked by sharing the emotional experiences of others.

Zhai

Young teachers often came to talk with me the challenges they have been confronted with. Some of their encounters were similar with mine and recalled my memory, so I shared my experiences with them and gave them suggestions.

Likewise, when I have difficulties, I will ask for help from senior colleagues or pour out my feelings. Senior teachers have unique opinions on some issues as they experienced a lot. You will feel more comfortable by talking with them.

Ms. Zhai emphasized the importance of have an open conversation with colleagues. She believed that communication is an effective way to vent emotions and colleagues are good listeners because they have many similar experiences and may share the same feelings. She benefited a great deal from interacting with senior teachers, which prompted her to follow suit. When she is faced with difficulties from young teachers, she related their experiences to hers and tended to help them. As she received kindness, understanding and support from others, she also treated those who are in struggles in the same way. By experiencing empathy towards

others, she formed a more compassionate self-image, which cannot only foster her own empathy but also demonstrate it to others.

6.1.2.2 Influences from peer competition

The participant teachers hold different attitudes toward the peer competition. For instance, Mr. Chen admitted that he disliked peer competition but sometimes he was unconsciously affected (See in 5.1.1.5).

However, Ms. Zhai argued that peer competition should be fair and positive, and we need to treat this competition correctly. She insisted that creating a healthy competitive environment can enhance teamwork and promote professional growth.

Zhai

Competition among colleagues will always exist, but the key is how you view this competitive relationship. For example, if I have gained career advancement or awarding in many teaching matches, I will take the initiative to give up the opportunity. I think young teachers should be given more chances to foster their professional development. Our senior teachers should understand their difficulties as we also experienced this when we were young. Our English subject is a team, and only by making progress together can our profession be better developed.

Here Ms. Zhai looked at the issue of peer competition from a senior's perspective. She can understand the difficulty of promotion for young teachers because she had experienced it. Healthy competition can motivate individuals to push themselves to excel and achieve the goals. Moreover, as a leader of the English team, she is concerned more about collective interests and mutual improvement. Empathy is crucial for effective leadership, including in competitive settings. Empathic leaders prioritize collaboration, interaction, and mutual respect among

competitors. They create a supportive and inclusive environment to encourage individuals to compete at their best while maintaining empathy and respect for others.

6.1.3 Teacher-parent interaction

6.1.3.1 Listening to parents' opinions and providing targeted counseling

It is common to receive parents' complaint since the target students are teenagers. Adolescents have various problems with their parents because they are very rebellious and intend to show their personalities. When parents fail to get along with their children, they tend to tell their struggles to teachers. On most occasions, teachers will patiently listen to their sufferings and positively responded to their requests.

Chen (Focus group)

I heard a lot of complaints from parents about their children's learning. For instance, they complained that their children are too lazy in learning and requested me to be strict with them. I told them not to worry too much and promised that I would try different ways to solve the issues. For those with good grades, I talked with their parents about their learning planning for their future and provided suggestions and asked parents to cooperate in improving their children's examination scores.

Ling (Focus group)

Some parents came to told me their children were very naughty and unruly. They wanted me to mediate and instruct their children. I comforted them and expressed understanding of their worries, but I know that some parents used very inappropriate words when educating their children. So, I suggested them to become less overemotional in talking with their children, particularly when their children failed in exams or misbehaved at school. I also told them I would guide students to keep calm and show politeness in family communication.

Both Mr. Chen and Ms. Ling displayed understanding, patience, and commitment in responding to parents' complaints. They first pacified parents' uneasy mood and proposed corresponding solutions. Cognitive empathy enables them to hold a non-judgmental attitude toward the conflict between parents and students. They stood both sides and not only considered students' feelings but also understood parents' worries and frustration.

Targeted consultations for parents regarding the children's learning, well-being, and behavior are common topics (Smith et al., 2021). Parents sometimes may not know how to assist their children's learning and come to ask for help. Teachers can offer targeted suggestions as they have a profound understanding of students' circumstance. Empathic teacher can validate and identify emotions expressed by parents and acknowledge parents' emotions with understanding and compassion, creating a supportive environment to address parents' worries openly and constructively (Morin, 2021).

6.1.3.2 Mutual understanding

Although Mr. Chen disliked being disturbed at non-working time, he can understand the parents. He claimed that if there was no emergency, parents would not contact him. Ms. Xiong also affirmed that communicating with parents during non-working hours is a part of teacher's job.

Chen (Focus group)

Honestly, there would be influences when I receive parents' calls at non-working time. I hope there would be no calls during my weekend, but I can understand some parents are in an urgent. Not all the parents disturbed me on non-working days. I think we should understand each other.

Xiong (Focus group)

Parents sometimes call me in the evening, but not speak too long. It will not influence my life. They are very polite and apologize for the disturbance. They also express that they will not take much of my leisure time. I think this has become a part of my daily routine.

Empathy serves as the foundation for mutual understanding, as it enables individuals to connect with others on an emotional level and appreciate their viewpoints. Here Mr. Chen and Ms. Xiong demonstrated understanding and support of parents' situations and experiences about receiving calls in nonworking time. They believed that they shoulder responsibility to help parents resolve some difficulties or listen to their stories. Furthermore, they mentioned that parents showed respect and apology about their bothering; therefore, mutual understanding can facilitate collaborative problem-solving between teachers and parents and strengthen the teacher-parent relationship by expressing empathy toward others' emotions and experiences.

6.1.4 Teacher-family interaction

The married teachers indicated that family life is a potential factor that might influence their work. As they undertake the role of a parent, they need to spend time on looking after their children. The married participants expressed gratitude to other family members' support so that they can devote to their work. They also emphasize the importance of separating family life from work life, which can reduce their burden and live a happy life.

6.1.4.1 Shared responsibilities

Ms. Wang and Ms. Xiong illustrated that they spent a long time on commute and cannot pick up her children after school. Their family members will help them take care their children on weekdays, which can relieve their pressure from work and

life. Accordingly, they utilize their leisure time to share the family responsibilities, such as doing housework, and accompanying children, which can foster family emotional bonds among family members.

Wang (Focus group)

I travel to the new campus for one and a half hours, and I finished my work at 6.00 pm on weekdays. The primary school often finishes around 4.00 pm or even early, so I am unable to pick up my kids on time. Thanks to my parents, they replace me to do this so that I do not have to worry about my kids being stranded at school. I even do not need to hurry from work to home. During the holiday, I devote most of my time to my family, such as organizing family trips and accompanying my kids to participate some interest-oriented classes.

Xiong (Focus group)

I am a head teacher of a class and must attend morning self-study. I leave home very early and have no time to prepare breakfast for my children. Sometimes, I also need to be on duty at school until night. Most housework is taken by my husband. He spent more time on accompanying our children. I feel very grateful for his devotion to our family. I look after of the child on weekends so that he can rest and relax because he also has a heavy workload.

Ms. Wang and Ms. Xiong acknowledged the efforts from their family members and express gratitude to their support. By understanding each other's roles and responsibilities, they distributed tasks more equitably, thereby promoting a balanced family life. They also admitted the significance of quality time and emotional connection within family. Therefore, they prioritized and allocated time for meaningful activities and interactions with family members.

6.1.4.2 Separating work and family

Some participants represented that it is necessary to separate work and family. They insisted that work and family cannot be mixed, otherwise, work-life balance cannot be maintained.

Zhai (Focus group)

I never bring my emotions to my family although I encountered something unhappy at school. Everyone will suffer difficulties and stress in the workplace. If we all take them home, the family atmosphere can become very depressing. Home is supposed to be a place where people relax. All the members in my family have reached a consensus that we should not allow work to influence our life.

Here Ms. Zhai argued that emotions raised at work should not be taken to home and she should digest her bad emotions by herself. Considering other family members might be involved, Ms. Zhai chose to regulate her negative emotions through different ways, *'I get used to a talkative person, but if my mood is down, I chose to stay alone to take a cup of tea or do yoga.'* It seems she is afraid of transiting unpleasure to her beloved ones in terms of her extrovert personality. By understanding family members' needs, concerns, and emotions, she believed she can better navigate and balance various aspects of family life.

Likewise, Ms. Xiong claimed that she did well in balancing the relationship between work and life. She reckoned that she concentrated on her work during the work time. Assuredly, when she is not working, she will take good care of her family.

Xiong (Focus group)

I think work and family like my left hand and right hand, and they do not conflict. Both exist at the same time, and they will not be mutually influenced. For example,

I can better settle down everyday affairs in the family or the workplace and reduce the impact. My kid is very young, and I should keep optimistic when staying with him, which is beneficial to his growth. My husband and I are both on the upswing in our careers. We both understand each other's intensity, difficulty, and needs. So, we hope to reduce our pressure and burden in family life through our efforts.

Here Ms. Xiong interpreted her views on work and family life, and she was capable to resolve the influence from daily trifles. She attempted to keep a positive mood to ensure her child's development. Since she and her husband shared similar experiences at work, they can empathize with each other's situations and become considerate of each other. In times of stress and difficulty, empathy helps family members support each other, foster resilience, and maintain a sense of balance.

The participant teachers responded to their families with understanding, inclusion, and gratitude, which reflects the role of empathy in strengthening the relationship between family members and balancing work and life. Previous research has demonstrated that work-life balance is positive correlated with empathy and personal achievement while burnout is a crucial mediating factor that has a negative correlation with work-life balance. Therefore, if teachers can balance work and life well, they would feel less exhausted in their jobs and empathy seems to be a key in keeping such balance.

6.2 Situations where empathy emerges in experienced teachers from private institutions

6.2.1 Teacher-student interaction

6.2.1.1 Getting along with students

It seems an obvious view that empathy is a process of interpersonal communication in essence (Zaki et al., 2008). With empathy, teachers can display

genuine concerns and build trust, rapport, and mutual respect by listening attentively and validating students' feelings. Therefore, empathy is regarded as the foundation of the positive teacher-students relationship. Teachers in private institutions indicated that they usually get along with students as friends, which can quickly bring them closer to each other and gain a deeper understanding of their situations, thoughts and emotions.

Liu (Focus group)

I think we are more likely friends. If I want to enter their inner world, I will get to know what they like or dislike through free chatting. Likewise, they also love to talk with me about their thoughts and minds. They told me that they enjoyed talking with me but sometime felt scared of me because I am so strict on their learning. If they cannot complete the learning tasks, they will get some punishment.

Zou (Focus group)

I am comparatively strict in class, but I become relaxed after class when I interact with the students. I want to know their opinions and attitude towards English learning, or their life stories, such as what happened in their schools, or what their annoyance is.

Here the participants described how they got along with their students. Both intended to get inside of the students' mindset, so they frequently communicate with students after class. As the atmosphere was relaxed after class, students are more likely to open up and allow teachers to understand their innermost feelings and thoughts when they feel unstrained enough. Interestingly, although the participants had no sense of distance from students after class, they kept a rigorous attitude towards class.

Specifically, the participant teachers underlined that there is almost no conflict between them and students. They expressed confidence in building the rapport with students. Whether in teaching or daily interactions, they have been highly recognized by students.

Liu (Focus group)

In my impression, I also had no conflict with my students. The possible reason is that they have recognized my teaching and accepted me. Because of such recognition, they respected me very much and we might not have frictions.

Xiang (Focus group)

I don't think it's a contradiction. Sometimes students found that the content taught in my class was different from what the teacher from their public schools, and they would have doubts. I used my method to convince them. Only by letting them accept my method can they better cooperated with my teaching.

Here the participants pointed out the significance of students' recognition and acceptance. As teachers from private institutions need to retain students in their class, it is critical for them to improve the recognition. When students accept their teaching patterns, their teaching work can be actively cooperated. To initiate the acceptance, teachers should become empathic, patient, and inclusive, among which empathy is the key to building trust and eliminating doubts. (De wried et al. 2007).

6.2.1.2 Relating to personal experiences

The sharing of similar experiences not only initiated the participants to connect with their past experiences, but also their past feelings that they experienced. The participants believed that they could understand and interpret students' feelings by drawing on the feeling they have experienced. For example, Mr. Li described the

process from being influenced by students' negative emotions to regulate these emotions.

Li

When my students developed anxiety and stress and I was also involved, I would consider how such negative emotions appeared. I recalled my English learning experiences and how I regulated myself with such emotions. I employed what I had experienced to relieve their emotions as well as mine.

Here Mr. Li felt that influenced of students' negative emotions enabled him to relate to his previous feelings in the same situation. He put himself into that situation and imagined how he was feeling at that moment and what he did to manage his own emotions. It appears that he shared the same feelings with students when he was emotionally disturbing. When he noticed the emotional influence, he automatically controlled his emotions and got rid of them. More importantly, he employed the same strategies to ease both his and students' emotions.

6.2.1.3 Indirect error correction

In the face-to-face interview, Mr. Li claimed that he would never directly tell the students what mistakes they had made. Instead, he wanted them to have an independent reflection on their mistakes. He paid more attention to about the mistake made by carelessness as he thought this is a mental problem that required him to be constantly reminded. He encouraged students to treat making mistakes as a valuable learning experience and provided support and encouragement to help them overcome challenges and achieve success. It is believed that empathic teachers treat mistakes as the opportunity of growthy and progress instead of reactions to intelligence and competence (Okonofua et al., 2016). Mr. Li promoted growth mindset by highlighting effort, persistence, and importance of learning from mistakes.

Li

After I finished reviewing the examination paper, I asked students to conclude their own mistakes and considered the reasons. If the mistake was due to failure to grasp the knowledge point, I reiterated the knowledge point again until students understood it. If the mistake was caused by carelessness, I seriously reminded them to pay attention to this problem and corrected their bad habits in their following practice

He described that his lesson was divided into two parts. The former part mainly focused on his explanation of some knowledge points, but he indicated that this part was too theoretical that students might felt bored. This is why he told some jokes to liven up the classroom atmosphere. He also believed that the process of error correction is a learning process, and he hoped that students can find factors of their mistakes and correct them, plus, he also provided some constructive suggestions. The latter part of the class, he tended to stimulate students' autonomy in error analysis and create a safe and supportive learning environment that allowed students to feel comfortable making mistakes.

6.2.2 Teacher-colleague interaction

6.2.2.1 Learning together

Empathy can promote professional growth and development between colleagues by encouraging constructive feedback, guiding, and supporting them. Empathic teachers provide constructive feedback in a sensitive and understanding way, which can improve their colleagues' practice. The participant teachers stated that they could learn from each other through some teaching and researching activities. They were happy to gain suggestions from others and believed that communication between colleagues is an opportunity to achieve self-improvement.

Jia (Focus group)

Listening to others' lessons is instructive because I can learn from other people's perspectives about some teaching methods that I may not yet know or have never heard of. It is also helpful to improve my teaching practice.

Zou (Focus group)

Every teacher is required to show a demo class. I think it is a good chance to show our teaching process in front of all the colleagues and get useful feedback from them, particularly from some experienced teachers. They told me which part needed to change and how to improve it. That is very helpful.

Li (Focus group)

We need to prepare the lessons together once a week in a classroom, where we can exchange our teaching experiences. We can gain guidance from each other, which facilitates our professional growth.

The participants provided three kinds of teaching activities they attended to promote communication among colleagues. They can learn from each other through these activities and improve their professional skills. They showed open and modest attitude towards others' suggestions but also assisted other colleagues. Empathy facilitates interaction among colleagues by active listening, understanding, and validation of each other's thoughts and concerns. By using empathy in communicating with colleagues, teachers can establish stronger connections and rapport, creating a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect, which can facilitate their professional development. Teachers who have empathy can recognize the unique advantages, needs and preferences of their colleagues. They create professional opportunities, resources, and support to meet the needs of individuals or teams, ensuring educators can gain relevant and individualized help to enhance their professional practice. (Rieckhoff et al., 2020)

6.2.1.2 Collaboration

The collaboration among colleagues in private institutions includes three aspects: teachers, assistants, and course sales. The course sales recruit students and allocate them to different students, while the assistants follow up feedback from students and parents and reported it to teachers. The participants explained that their performances were closely related to the number of students they could teach. The feedback is another standard to evaluate their teaching quality and they needed to keep update according to it.

Jia (Focus group)

If you get along with the course sales, they will prioritize to allocate students for you. Of course, you must promise the teaching quality. I can understand their worries and concerns because their performances are associated with my teaching quality. If students drop the class, the sales and I will be fined.

Zou (Focus group)

Our school have assistants to communicate with parents about their feedback on the course. They helped me a lot to cope with complaints or suggestions from parents so that I can save more time to focus on my teaching.

Here the participants demonstrated mutual understanding and gratitude that can promote collaboration with colleagues. Empathy enables them to understand their colleagues' perspectives, challenges, and feelings. Such understanding generates the basis for effective cooperation as it allows teachers to work together harmoniously. When teachers address problems with empathy, collaboration problem-solving is more effective. They consider the influence of decisions on their colleagues and seek for solutions that benefit every colleague involved, leading to a sustainable outcome.

6.2.3 Teacher-parent interaction

6.2.3.1 Promoting Two-way Communication

The participant teachers focused on communicating with parents with openness and respect and listening attentively to parents' worries, questions, and feedback. They kept continuous interaction with parents, allowing them to know the advancement, growth, and achievement of their children. They also actively sought parents' suggestions and involved parents in their children's education, fostering a sense of partnership and collaboration.

Liu

I communicate with parents and give feedback periodically. Many parents think that I really care about their children because I do not put up any pretense and tell them the true situation of their children in a matter-of-fact way. Of course, I communicate with parents in a more tactful way. I first identify what students are doing well, and then talk about what they need to improve.

By providing periodical feedback, parents can keep up with their children's learning and feel that the teacher is responsible. Ms. Liu emphasized that the importance of communication is honesty, which helps build a trusting relationship between parents. It has been identified that trust is essential for effective collaboration between teachers and parents (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Here Ms. Liu demonstrated empathy, respect and understanding to parents, which can promote open communication and cooperation, supporting students' academic and socio-emotional growth. Considering the acceptance from both parents and teachers, she did not directly mention what the child did not do well, but first affirmed the student's strengths and then talked about what needed to be improved. This way of communication is easier for parents and children to accept, and it can also strengthen the parent-child relationship and let parents understand their children's strengths.

Furthermore, Mr. Li argued that communication is an effective way to achieve collaboration between parents. He believed that the improvement of students' academic performance cannot be achieved without the involvement of parents.

Li

I told the parents that students' improvement needed your encouragement and interaction. I think parents should stand with me and become my assistant to teach students at home. I wanted them to know students do better or worse depending on the mental capacity. If you put too much pressure on your children, it would take a long time for them to digest this emotion before they calmed down to study.

Here Mr. Li pointed out the pivotal role of parents' positive reflections on students' performances. He realized the different needs and preferences of parents in attending their children's education. He provided parents with opportunities to support and encourage their participation in students' learning, which enables them to know their children's mindset. In addition, he advocated parents not to impose a burden on their children and tried to understand their mentality. With cognitive empathy, Mr. Li understood the challenges and barriers that parents may encounter in supporting their children's learning. He analyzed students' psychological state and pointed out that students' mentality is the key to affecting their performance, offering specific guidance for parents to instruct their children at home.

6.2.3.2 Being attentive to the family context

The participant teachers agreed that students' academic performance is relevant to their family atmospheres. They acknowledged the unique dynamics, values, and priorities of each family, and communicated with parents in a respectful way. They needed to understand students' diverse family contexts so that they could

make targeted strategies and decisions. For instance, when they discovered students in a bad state or students asked them for help due to family problems, they would immediately communicate with their parents to get to know what happened.

Zou (Focus group)

When I realized they were not active in class, I first talked with them after class. If they had some family problems, I contacted their parents immediately. I needed to know what happened and helped to mediate the parent-child relationship.

Xiang (Focus group)

Some parents believed that they understood their children very well because they raised the children. However, it is not true. Some students may not display a real image when they faced their parents but communicated more with me. Therefore, when I taught such students, I told their parents to try to stand on their children's' position to know them and not educate them from own perspective.

The participant teachers used empathy by communicating with parents, understanding the family context, and mediating the parent-child relationship. In teacher-parent communication, empathy means respect, inclusive, and understandable. Teachers realized that the family context and parents' personalities determined students' learning status. It is necessary for them understand how parents might influence their children's experiences, behaviors, and characteristics. Having a profound understanding of such information facilitates to bridge the distance between the parents and teachers, but also adopt proper instructions.

6.2.4 Teacher-family interaction

6.2.4.1 Recognizing family contributions

Some married participants indicated that working in the private institutions had impact on their family life because of the specific working schedule. The working hours of private institutions are completely to normal working hours. Therefore, they may have less time to accompany their families. They felt sorry for this and were grateful for the efforts of other family members.

Xiang (Focus group)

My family is very understanding of the nature of my work. If I had evening lessons, it influenced my family. My family members needed to prepare the dinner and waited for me. Sometimes, if the class began very early, I needed them to take me to the school.

Liu (Focus group)

I usually have evening lessons during the weekdays. My husband needs to pick up my daughter from school and supervise her homework. I often feel sorry for not being able to be with my daughter, but she never complained. She told me she could understand I had a busy workload.

Both participant teachers mentioned that they cannot engage in normal family life because of their working hours. They apologized for their absence of family gathering and expressed gratitude to their family members. Empathy plays an essential role in enhancing family life by fostering understanding, connection, and support among family members. Although they cannot attend family, they provided emotional support and comfort for family members in challenging time. When family members understand and empathize with each other, they can offer compassion, encouragement, and comfort, enhancing family connection and resilience.

6.2.4.2 Advocating for family needs

Due to the specific working time in private institutions, the married participants claimed that they intended to find a stable career in the public school. Although their families supported their jobs, they expected to follow the pace of their families and undertake the family responsibility.

Zou (Focus group)

My son was just born, and he needed my care. If I had been working in a private sector, my time would be completely inconsistent with his. If I could work in a public school, I would have stable vacation time to spend with him.

Xiang (Focus group)

I think a family still needs all members to be on the same page. Although they can understand my work and give the greatest support, I also want to contribute to my family. Working in the private sector is not a long-term solution. I need a stable job with normal working hours. I am looking for a vacancy in some public schools.

Recognizing the need of their families, the participants tended to change their working patterns and keep the pace with their family. They believed they held the responsibility for every family member and a stable job can benefit both. Empathy enables family members to understand and validate each other's thoughts, feelings, and experiences. When family members empathize with each other, they display concerns and respect, which can develop a sense of belonging and acceptance.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive cross-case analysis of how experienced language teachers in Chinese public schools and private tutoring institutions express and enact empathy within various ecological contexts. By comparing the emotional, relational, and professional dynamics that shape empathic behavior, the chapter reveals that while the core value of empathy remains consistent, its expression is deeply influenced by institutional structures, teaching philosophies, and personal experiences.

Across both settings, empathy consistently emerged as a relational force central to teacher-student interactions, particularly in responding to students' emotional struggles, academic challenges, and behavioral conflicts. Experienced teachers used empathy not only to support students' learning but also to build trust, promote well-being, and foster inclusive classroom environments. Through years of practice, these teachers demonstrated refined emotional regulation and perspective-taking, highlighting empathy as a mature and professionalized skill.

Differences between public school and private institution teachers primarily reflected institutional expectations and working conditions. Public school teachers emphasized structured support and moral responsibility, often operating within hierarchical systems that required them to balance empathy with discipline and performance mandates. In contrast, private institution teachers, driven by student satisfaction and market-based accountability, relied on relational closeness and flexibility to maintain student engagement and retention. These distinct pressures shaped how empathy was framed—either as a moral obligation or a strategic relational tool—thereby informing teachers' evolving professional identities.

Furthermore, empathy extended beyond the classroom to influence collegial interactions, parent communication, and work-life balance. Empathic collaboration with colleagues promoted professional growth and emotional support, while understanding parents' perspectives enhanced teacher-parent partnerships. In the realm of family life, empathy helped teachers manage the tension between personal and professional responsibilities, contributing to greater emotional stability and identity coherence.

In sum, this cross-case analysis illustrates that empathy is not merely an emotional response but a core dimension of experienced teachers' professional identity. It shapes how they interpret their roles, engage with others, and sustain themselves in emotionally complex environments. Recognizing and supporting empathy at both the institutional and policy levels is therefore essential for fostering teacher well-being, professional fulfillment, and meaningful educational practice.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This chapter critically examines the research results of three research questions and interprets how empathy is expressed by teachers within the framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological ecosystems theory. Drawing on rich qualitative data from public schools and private institutions in China, some newly developing themes are situated within existing literature while also identifying new insights into the dimension of relation, emotion and structure in teacher empathy. This chapter particularly focuses on how the ecological environment (from direct classroom settings to broader sociocultural and policy systems) influences empathic interactions with students, parents and colleagues. Through cross-case analysis, this chapter also emphasizes the dynamic and evolving nature of empathy across different stages of teachers' professional identities, thereby offering a holistic understanding of its role in educational practice.

7.1 RQ1: Under what circumstances does empathy arise when teachers interact with different individuals across ecological systems?

The case studies explored the various situations in which empathy emerges between teachers in public schools and private institutions. Empathy, as an interactive and dynamic process, was shown to influence teaching practices and strengthen the relationships between teachers and other relevant persons to their career through ongoing interactions.

Despite structural and policy differences between public schools and private institutions, teachers across both educational settings often share a common approach to express empathy, rooted in their professional values, emotional experiences and caring of students' development. These similarities reflect the relational and moral dimensions of teaching, which transcend institutional boundaries. The answers to RQ1 summarized the situations where empathy

emerged through interactions between teachers with different people within the two contexts.

7.1.1 Empathy in teacher-student interaction

Empathy in teacher-student interaction refers to teachers' ability to identify, understand students' emotions and recognize states to make proper responses (Sun et al., 2023). It is not a single behavior, but a multidimensional relational process, facilitating students' learning, mental and physical health, and professional identity. Empathy in teacher-student interaction in this research consists of perspective-taking, emotional resonance, empathic communication, empathic regulation and empathy in pedagogical decision-making. Each aspect of empathy functioned differently across teachers' performance.

7.1.1.1 Perspective-taking

Cognitive empathy (perspective-taking) refers to teachers can understand students' thoughts, feelings, and views without experiencing their emotional states. It enables teachers to predict students' needs, misunderstandings and difficulties, and adjust pedagogies according to students' learning (Belacchi, & Farina, 2012).

Regarding the findings from public-school teachers, it is discovered that students are more likely to raise negative feelings when they encounter academic struggles or personal challenges, which might evoke teachers' empathy to facilitate them to overcome these adversities. The findings agreed that teacher empathy inspires them to make a sensitive reaction to students' emotional needs and provide comfort and encouragement after noticing students' negative emotional states (Baston, 2009; Weisz, et al., 2020).

Specifically, when students encountered academic challenges, two participants teachers emphasized that they held responsibilities to foster positive emotions and students' positive attitudes toward learning. By taking students' emotional states into account, teachers can better recognize, plan, and implement preventive strategies that encourage positive behavior, minimize classroom disruptions, and enhance students' motivation to learn (Banks, 2014). On the other hand, some teachers attempted to use various teaching strategies to motivate students by aligning lessons with interests and enhancing student engagement. The findings reflected that the goals we have in cognitive empathy shape the strategies we use to understand others (Spaulding, 2017, p. 16).

When the participant teachers, both from public schools and private institutions, recognized that students were experiencing emotional challenges, they responded accordingly. The teachers identified two main causes of emotional struggles: academic difficulties and personal issues, such as problems with friendships or family dynamics. By analyzing and understanding these situations, the teachers implemented targeted solutions to help students overcome these challenges. This aligns with the concept of "theory of mind," which highlights our ability to understand that others have different internal psychological experiences. This ability allows teachers to grasp students' distinct emotions and perspectives (Dunn et al., 1991). Empathy proved particularly effective in easing students' anxiety, especially in high-pressure subjects like mathematics and foreign languages, where reducing stress can lead to greater engagement and participation (Zhang, 2022). Moreover, teacher empathy has been shown to enhance student engagement by helping teachers understand students' personal and social situations and responding to their emotions with care (Martinsone & Žydžiūnaite, 2023). Recognizing the importance of fostering engagement, Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) encourage teachers to adopt strategies such as expressing empathy, compassion,

and kindness, which can significantly boost learners' emotional and behavioral engagement.

7.1.1.2 Emotional resonance

Affective empathy (emotional resonance) involves feeling with students—experiencing a vicarious emotional reaction. It helps teachers connect with students at an emotional level and create a warm, safe and trusty environment. Hargreaves (1998) supports that affective empathy plays a crucial role in forming emotional connections to motivate learning.

Teachers who demonstrate empathy can communicate in ways that validate students' feelings, making students feel heard and valued (Warren, 2014). Cross-case analysis in the public school revealed how teachers motivated students by building and maintain emotional bonds, through which students could feel valued and connected, and accept the teachers. Acceptance often leads to empathy, and empathy fosters acceptance. Understanding another person's perspective can deepen connections and enhance appreciation for their individuality (Bill, 2012). These findings align with a meta-analysis of teacher-student relationships, which found that teacher empathy is one of the strongest predictors of positive student outcomes, including academic achievement and emotional and behavioral well-being (Cornelius-White, 2007).

Similarly, private-institution teachers also intended to raise emotional resonance with their students by relating personal experiences and feelings. They related their learning experiences in the childhood and acknowledged that learning English was a struggled process, which reflected to previous research to some extent, which have demonstrated that teachers who lived or worked overseas where they did not

share the same language and culture or who had experience of learning a foreign language are more likely to empathize with learners because of these experiences. (Faez, 2012). Brain image studies support that when a person perceives another one's pain, compared with their responses to a stranger, his/her empathic response of another person is higher (Singer, 2006). As teachers are acquaintance with their students, it is easy to get inside into the students' mind and feel what they feel.

Teaching is an emotional process, in which emotions of teachers and students are mutually influenced, called emotion contagion. The emotion contagion is often regarded as 'emotional empathy' that subjectively reflects others' feeling state (Hatfield, et al., 2009). To address it, teachers needed to adjust their states first, and then help students to regulate their mindset. As all the participants are experienced teachers, they indicated that they are now less influenced by students. If so, they would try to control their emotions or regulate their status in different ways. Through their statements, it has been demonstrated that effective empathy requires emotional regulation. They must manage their own emotions while remaining present and supportive.

The findings also reflect to some extent the arguments in categorizing types of empathy and identified the interplay between empathy and self-regulation. Traditionally, empathy is divided into two dimensions: cognitive and affective (Meyers, et al. 2019). However, Heberlein and Saxe (2005) pointed out the limitation of dichotomy and proposed another substitution approach. They argue that although cognitive empathy and affective empathy are different, there is a crucial fact between their interaction as emotional components are thought to be the essence of empathy, while cognitive elements are regarded as the process of creating this essence. In accordance with this idea, empathy can be treated as a double-process model, including understanding others' emotions or situation,

raising resonance with others and the ability to utilize this understanding to help others (Decety & Howard, 2013). Therefore, a third component is introduced into empathy, called empathic concern or compassionate empathy (Davis, 1996). Although researchers still debate on the constitution of empathy, it seems that the three components have been distinguished, perspective taking, sharing emotions, and feeling of compassion (Blair, 2005).

One view might embody the above three elements (Decety and Meyer, 2008). They draw on the results from the field of cognitive neuroscience and developmental neuroscience, proposing that empathy is composed of three parts:

- (1) Emotional sharing: the process of sharing others' feelings.
- (2) Self and other awareness: the ability to distinguish personal emotions and experiences from others.
- (3) Mental flexibility and self-regulation: mental flexibility enables individuals to accept others' views. Self-regulation refers that one may not be engulfed by others' experience by managing his/her own emotions. Therefore, they will act objectively.

Compassion has been proved to intricately connected with empathy and self-regulation (Claravall & Evans-Amalu, 2020). Cognitive empathy helps teachers to understand students' emotions and situations, while emotional empathy enables them to feel students' emotions. However, emotional empathy might arouse strongly emotional reactions, particularly when teachers deeply link to the emotions of students. If teachers can recognize they have been infected by students' emotions, they will regulate their emotional reactions and critically analyze the source of impacts. This self-regulation brings people clarity of mind and generates compassion. In social research, acting with compassion allows us to

interact with multiple society (Rule et al., 2014), from which compassion is defined as the feeling that enacts from witnessing others' distress and fosters the desire to help (Goetz et al., 2010). This is why the participant teachers attempted to help students overcome negative emotions or states.

Although emotional empathy is considered as a valuable aspect on social interactions, which facilitates connection with others by perceiving and responding to their emotional states, fostering understanding and support, excessive emotional empathy might lead to difficulties in establishing the boundary between individuals' emotions and others' emotions. This lack of separation can cause emotional overwhelm. Therefore, cognitive empathy and self-regulation are advocated to combine emotional empathy, which can promote positive social interaction, supportive relationship, and effective communication.

7.1.1.3 Emotional support and responsiveness

Empathy becomes meaningful when it needs to action—responding appropriately to students' emotional or academic needs. This identifies that empathy is not just an internal state but a relational practice with visible outcomes.

Teachers who are attuned to students' emotional needs can form deeper connections, narrowing the distance between them and their students. Several participants noted that by placing themselves in their students' shoes and understanding their inner worlds, they were able to foster stronger rapport, which not only improved classroom behavior but also positively impacted academic performance. These findings are consistent with earlier research showing that empathy helps build strong teacher-student relationships, which, in turn, promote student engagement and participation in classroom activities (Richardson et al., 2012). The significance of empathy in specific subjects, such

as English language teaching (ELT), has also been emphasized by recent studies (Kianinezhad, 2023).

Furthermore, the participants' observations and interpretations of students' nonverbal cues often prompted emotional and cognitive reflections, which led to specific actions. Recent research in developmental psychology suggests that empathy is not merely an automatic response to emotional cues but a process involving observation, reflection, and action (de Vignemont & Singer, 2006). Emotional support can be conveyed through both verbal and non-verbal means. For example, Ms. Zhai described how she would pay particular attention to students who suddenly avoided eye contact and inquire about their well-being. Teachers who display cognitive empathy are sensitive to students' emotional struggles and provide necessary support, such as encouragement or comfort, to help them navigate challenges more effectively (Sun et al., 2023; Meyers et al., 2019).

It appears that observation and interpretation of students' visual cues is a crucial part of teacher empathy. Empathic teachers can understand students' nonverbal cues and indicators of emotions and experiences. When they observe students, they can notice students' body language, facial expressions, and tones. These cues can help them recognize students' feelings, engagement, and wellbeing (Riess & Krat-Todd, 2014). Based on early conceptions, empathy was thought to be how we understand others' mind (Johoda, 2005) and has been incorporated into many theories of empathy in the field of psychotherapy and cognition. Investigation of theory of mind in brain images provided new observation about how people can know others' mind. ToM proposes that people can conclude unique inference about unobserved mental status (desires, intentions, goals, beliefs, knowledge, emotions) of other people through social cognition (Adolphs,

2009). This theory proposition aligns with the findings that teachers can gain insight into students' minds and emotions through observation and interpretation of visual cues. Although ToM and empathy are two separate abilities, they share similar features and develop at different times and in different areas of the brain (Singer, 2006). Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2004) argue that mature empathy contains both ToM and shared feelings.

7.1.1.4 Empathic communication

Empathy must be expressed through language, tone and body language (Riess & Kraft-Todd, 2014). Although teachers can identify students' emotional states through observations, it is more accurate and direct to communicate empathy with verbal affirmations, particularly when conflicts existing.

Public- school teachers reported encountering more conflicts with students. This is partly because, in addition to focusing on academic performance, they are also responsible for managing classroom discipline. Adolescents, who are naturally inclined to resist authority, often push back against such discipline. To mitigate conflicts, public school teachers found that responding to students' misbehavior with empathy, rather than punishment, led to better outcomes. While they maintained discipline during class, they chose to address disruptive behavior through gentle and sincere communication afterward, aiming to understand the reasons behind the misbehavior instead of exacerbating tensions. These results align with previous research suggesting that empathy can help reduce behavioral problems by addressing the emotional root causes of students' actions (Malti et al., 2016). Some participants also underlined the role of respect in buffering conflicts, proving that they can concern the world and people around us and respect ourselves through a respectful conversation and understand how such self-esteem and respecting others are indispensable. Therefore, engaging a

respectful dialogue allows us to see the distinctions and disparities between us and others help expand our views on ourselves and the world (del Collado, 2012).

In contrast, teachers in private institutions reported fewer conflicts with students. The smaller class sizes allowed them to monitor each student's behavior more closely, thus preventing potential disruptions. Moreover, private institutions, being profit-driven, prioritize student retention, meaning that teachers are less likely to engage in conflicts with students to maintain high performance evaluations. Some teachers in private institutions may even feign empathy to ensure favorable student outcomes. Nevertheless, many private school teachers are genuinely experienced and skillful in using emotional strategies, including empathy, to foster positive relationships with their students. Classroom observations revealed that these teachers modeled empathy through behaviors like active listening, validating students' emotions, and offering positive reinforcement. This observation reflects the ongoing debate about the emotional labor involved in teaching. Some scholars argue that teachers may need to create a façade of caring to avoid becoming overly emotionally invested in their roles (Schutz & Lee, 2014). Emotional labor theory suggests that while teachers are expected to display empathy, much of the emotional expression in their work may lie between professional obligations and genuine feelings (Hochschild, 1983). However, despite the emotional toll of constantly encouraging and motivating students, it is the humanistic nature of teaching that drives teachers to persevere in their roles (O'Connor, 2008).

7.1.2 Empathy in teacher-parent interaction

The results demonstrated that teachers who exhibit empathy in their interactions with parents can enhance communication, foster collaboration, and positively influence students' learning outcomes. Empathy allows teachers to better

understand parents' concerns, perspectives, and expectations, leading to more effective communication and stronger partnerships in supporting children's education. For instance, participants who were willing to listen to parents and offer targeted advice on students' learning helped build trust and collaboration between home and school. In this way, empathy acts as a bridge that connects these two contexts (Edwards & Kutaka, 2015).

Public school teachers often used empathy to engage parents in resolving students' challenges, such as academic difficulties and behavioral issues. By recognizing and addressing parents' emotional responses, teachers were able to create a cooperative atmosphere that encouraged shared responsibility for students' development. This finding aligns with Epstein et al. (2011), who emphasized the importance of empathy in fostering school-family partnerships, noting that empathic teachers are more likely to involve parents in meaningful problem-solving efforts to support student success. Meanwhile, teachers in private institutions were especially mindful when delivering difficult news to parents. They approached these conversations with compassion and care, ensuring that discussions were handled sensitively. When students did not show progress over time, teachers balanced advocating for students' needs while respecting parents' emotional responses. Additionally, empathy enabled private-institution teachers to be attuned to the family context, including financial pressures and stress, which allowed for more effective interventions by considering how such factors might impact student performance.

However, the findings also highlighted both positive and negative effects of empathy on teachers. Public school teachers often experienced greater understanding and respect from parents, as both parties were able to appreciate each other's challenges. For example, parents refrained from contacting teachers

outside of working hours, and teachers, in turn, were sympathetic to parents' emergencies, offering help even during their breaks. In contrast, private-institution teachers reported that they were sometimes required to cater to parents' demands. Some parents, believing they had paid for English courses, expected teachers to bear the responsibility for improving their children's grades. These parents frequently expressed anxiety and concern, placing added pressure on teachers, who in turn felt stressed and burdened by these negative emotions. The findings support the notion that individuals engaged in emotional labor, particularly in roles that require frequent interaction with others, may be unconsciously affected by others' emotions, leading to increased stress (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015).

7.1.3 Empathy in teacher-colleague interaction

Teacher empathy is an essential aspect of professional collaboration in collegial relations, which can create a positive working environment, reduce conflicts, and improve the entire efficiency in the school. Empathy between colleagues allows teachers to mutually understand their emotional states, professional challenges and perspectives, thereby establishing a more solid professional connection and better team cooperation. For example, each subject group in public schools regularly organizes teaching and research meetings, where all teachers of English subjects gather to discuss teaching methods, report and summarize their work, and share useful resources. Especially for some young teachers, such seminars can provide them with career and emotional help, allowing them to overcome professional challenges and continue their careers.

Teachers from private schools said that they have demonstration classes every week, and teachers will listen to each other's classes and then make suggestions, which gives them more opportunities to learn from each other's strengths and

weaknesses, improve their teaching level, and enhance professional development. These research results show the importance of empathy in the professional development of teachers. Whether for new or experienced teachers, they need to have empathy to put themselves in other people's shoes, understand and respect other people's perspectives, become tolerate different voices and maintain resilience and well-being in the face of professional struggles. The result identified that empathy could foster an ethical and caring community among teachers, enhancing mutual support and respect (Kelchtermans, 2009). Likewise, some researchers also suggest that empathy plays a pivotal role in building learning communities among teachers, where emotional and professional support lead to more effective professional development (Stoll et al., 2006).

However, younger public-school teachers mentioned that they would feel pressure because of competition from their peers, especially when the class grades were ranked, and they would feel frustrated or anxious because of the poor grades of their classes. More experienced teachers suggested that colleagues should not regard some grade rankings as a competitive relationship, but that everyone needs to learn and help each other, and then make progress together. Therefore, the level of empathy of teachers is also related to their teaching experience and teaching years. Young teachers are more susceptible to some negative emotions and are not able to manage their emotions well. This finding confirms the association between empathy and teaching experiences that experienced teachers have often developed strategies to cope with stress and burnout. By staying self-health, they can better keep empathic towards students despite challenging situations. Veteran teachers set an example for novice educators in balancing empathy and self-caring (Jennings & Min, 2023).

Conversely, the relationship between teachers in private institutions is more complicated because they should also deal with sales and academic affairs.

Therefore, they need more empathy to understand each other, tolerate each other and promote cooperation. Sales has a certain connection between teachers and parents. If the teacher has good professional ability, sales will give priority to recommending this teacher. At the same time, a stable and harmonious relationship is also one of the main factors for sales to promote classes.

7.2 RQ2: What causes the differences in how teachers in public and private institutions express empathy across ecological systems?

The expression of empathy is affected by various ecological factors. These ecological factors refer to different ecological systems that influence individuals, as stated in ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These factors exist in multiple influential layers from the classroom setting to broader social and cultural backgrounds. The following sections discuss how different ecological factors influence teachers' ability to exhibit empathy.

7.2.1 Microsystem

Microsystem, 'which involves the structures and processes taking in an immediate setting, containing the developing person (e.g., home, classroom, playground)' (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p.80). As the developing person, teachers might be affected by the activities they attend, they role the play in, and the relationships they are involved (Tao, 2021). Therefore, for the teachers in this study, their behavior in the classroom, the role they played in each lesson and their relations with the stakeholders (students, colleagues, leaders, and family) are all included in this system.

7.2.1.1 Belief

In recent years, emotion in teaching and the relational dimension has gained increasing attentions, particularly the functions of teacher belief and empathy

shaping classroom practices, teacher-student relationships and professional identity. Although these concepts are often studied in singular, newly research indicates that they are closely intertwined. Teacher belief toward teaching, learning, and students can significantly affect when and how to express empathy in educational settings (Zembylas, 2007; Cooper, 2011).

According to the results from data analysis, the participants believed that they acted different roles when getting along with their students. Most participants from private institutions thought they could make friends with students to bridge the distance between them, while some public-school teachers argued that they needed to build relatedness with students but could not go beyond the teacher-student relationship. For example, two elder teachers from the public school claimed that there should be a sense of propriety between teachers and students. The findings echoed previous research that teachers who believed they are as an educator, a carer or a mentor reflected expressing explicit expectations, concerning students, and considering students' viewpoint and feelings (Reeve et al., 2014). These reflections also identified the situations that they raised empathy. Conversely, those participants who believed that their roles as a friend with students may mirror their belief about the equality between teachers and students. It appears that they demonstrated empathy by establishing trust and constantly encouraging their students.

Teacher beliefs about teacher-student boundaries, emotional expression and authority are affected by cultural norms and institutional policies. For instance, in Confucian-influenced contexts, teachers may feel conflicted between showing empathy and maintaining formality or authority (Chan & Rao, 2009). This phenomenon is particularly obvious among public-school teachers. Since they manage a large-scale class, they should show deterrence to maintain class order.

A public-school teacher mentioned that she did not meet a student's needs during the class and the student was severely criticized for disturbing the class. After class, she also expressed regret, believing that she shouldn't have neglected the students' emotions. The results revealed that teachers held contradictory beliefs about expressing negative emotions. On the one hand, they recognized that negative emotions damaged the teaching quality, teacher-student relationship, and classroom atmosphere. On the other hand, teachers believed that expressions of negative emotions facilitate to discipline students (Jiang et al., 2019). Therefore, teachers' different beliefs about classroom management and disciplines have an impact on their empathy with students' actions and socio-emotional needs. The teacher who believes in proactive, positive approaches are more likely to empathize with students' encounters and feelings, attending to their basic needs.

Teachers hold various viewpoints on the role of emotion. Some believe that emotion is the core of learning, while others argue that emotion may distract them (Hargreaves, 1998). When teachers regard emotion as an integral pedagogy, they are more likely to produce empathy. A participant teacher who worked in a private institution illustrated that sometimes she might unconsciously express negative emotions in class, but when she realized her students were influenced, she immediately mediated her mental state and masked negative emotions. This result aligned with the characteristics of profound empathy, with which teachers can develop positive emotions (Cooper, 2011). Teachers' self-beliefs, including their self-efficacy and emotional self-efficacy, also moderated the relationship between their beliefs about students and empathetic responses. Higher self-beliefs were associated with greater empathy, as teachers who were confident in their abilities were more likely to interact positively with their students (Lussiez, 2009). This association suggests that enhancing teachers' self-beliefs could improve empathetic practices.

7.2.1.2 Autonomy

In the complex dynamic model of autonomy development, Borges (2022) proposed that it contained the correlation between autonomy and empathy in language teaching in the affective subsystem. Both autonomy and empathy are dynamic skills related to the context, which can be cultivated and developed in the whole life (Krznicaric, 2014; Mercer, 2016). For this aspect, autonomy and empathy are regarded as a closely interconnected structure in learning and teaching since they require teachers to respect students' learning process and understand their decision on practicing autonomy in and beyond the classroom (Borges & Castro, 2022). Therefore, teacher empathy might vary from their autonomy in class, leading to new behavioral patterns.

In hierarchical or exam-driven systems, like East Asian countries, teacher autonomy is often constrained by the standardized curriculum, rigid assessment systems, and up-to-bottom policy (Ho, 2006; Gu, 2014). These restrictions can reduce opportunities for teachers to foster empathic relationships, especially when empathy is thought to be conflicted with discipline and authority (Chan & Rao, 2009). In China, public schools were stipulated to use the uniform teaching materials and syllables by the national ministry of education. The findings presented that public-school teachers need to conduct their teaching practice based on the context of teaching materials although they know the curriculum sometimes was inappropriate for students' learning.

In contrast, the nature of private institutions is to check for deficiencies in students' learning, so there are no rigid regulations on teaching materials. Teachers can choose any tutoring materials suitable for improving students' academic performance. When teachers have curricular and instructional autonomy, they can better design student-centered experiences to fulfill learners' emotional and

cognitive needs (Littlewood, 2001). Such freedom allows pedagogy based on empathy to become more flexible, responsive and relational. The participants from private institutions developed more curriculum autonomy that they had freedom to select and adapt teaching materials, resources, and strategies to fulfill students' needs. They can tailor curriculum content, pace, and sequence to align with students' learning goals, competence, and backgrounds.

Teacher autonomy can initiate empathy through the understanding of students' social emotions, academic needs (Stefanou et al., 2004). Autonomy also allows the participants to involve students in the process of decision-making and propose their opinions. When teachers gave students autonomy of their learning goals, projects, and activities, they can develop empathy by respecting and recognizing students' point of views, preferences, and agency. However, the public-school teachers possessed less flexibility to students' needs because of the restrictions on teaching materials and syllables. They knew that they needed to adapt the teaching content and employed targeted exercises, but they failed to do it. The findings are consistent with previous research that teachers who are free to choose curriculum and teaching approaches are more likely to empathize with students (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

7.2.1.3 Self-reflection

Empathy has been increasingly seen as a cornerstone of effective teaching, enabling educators to understand, respond and support students' emotional, cognitive and social needs (Jia et al., 2025). Meanwhile, self-reflection, the process that teachers critically examine their own beliefs, practices, emotions and reactions, plays a crucial role in fostering empathy in professional practices (Rieckhoff et al., 2020). Empathy can deepen student-teacher relationships, while self-reflection allows them to better understand students' emotional reactions, bias and dynamics of relationships.

It has been proved that self-reflection plays an important role in enhancing teacher empathy by increasing self-awareness, recognizing stimulus of emotions, scanning interaction with students, developing empathic listening, enhancing empathy towards students, and promoting continuous improvement on empathic teaching practice (Morin, 2020). Reflections from the public-school participants centered on the emotional aspects, especially when conflicts with students led to negative emotions. These teachers reflected on their actions and considered what might have caused discomfort for their students, then took steps to address the issues. By reflecting on past interactions, successes, and challenges, they became more aware of the emotions that could affect their ability to empathize with students. This reflection led them to change their behavior and better regulate their emotions. They developed an automatic ability to understand their students' experiences and identify emotional triggers in various teaching contexts.

Private-institution teachers were more inclined to reflect on their teaching practices, as their primary goal was to improve students' academic performance. Their source of students relied heavily on the quality of their teaching, making it necessary to continually refine their methods to meet students' needs. Reflecting on practice is seen as a pathway to empathy, helping teachers create emotionally safe environments and enhance the overall school experience through ongoing learning and improvement (Jack & Levett-Jones, 2022). Furthermore, both teacher autonomy and empathy enabled participants to foster a supportive and inclusive classroom atmosphere, where students felt valued, respected, and understood (Weinberger, 2017).

7.2.1.4 Emotional Experiences

Teaching is not only a cognitive and instructional task, but also a deeply emotional practice. Teachers' emotional experiences—from enjoyment and inspiration to

frustration, stress and vulnerability, are inseparable from their daily interactions with students, colleagues and institutional systems (Hargreaves, 1998; Zembylas, 2005). In this emotional context, empathy is a key professional capacity, enabling teachers to build connections with students and respond to their needs in an empathic and supportive way.

Empathy in teaching is not fixed. It is shaped by the teacher's own emotional experiences, identity, and the institutional culture in which they work. According to Hochschild's theory of emotional labor (1983), teachers are often expected to display empathy, care and patience although their inner emotions are not consistent with these expectations. This may lead to empathic pressure or burnout, especially in a higher stressful environment with limited support (Yin, 2016). The private-institution teachers felt stressful and anxious from the heavy teaching tasks. They indicated that the school cannot provide enough teaching resources to support their teaching and sometimes the course arrangement was unreasonable. However, the participants in this study stated that they felt delighted when students shared their happiness with them, like success in examinations. This result aligns with the studies, which illustrate that teachers who experience joy, fulfillment and emotional support are more likely to engage empathically with students. Positive emotional experiences reinforce professional motivation and relational trust, which are foundational for authentic empathy (Day & Qing, 2009).

Emotional experiences, whether with students, colleagues, or parents, can catalyze empathic reactions. The private-institution teachers encountered negative emotional experiences with their leaders, as they were burdened with heavy workloads and lacked understanding and support. This, in turn, led to a negative attitude and decreased motivation in their daily work. Davis (1994) highlights that empathic relationships foster mutual understanding, helping to build trust and

emotional closeness. Emotional reciprocity is key to sustaining these relationships (Kerem, 2001). When one person displays empathy, it often triggers a feedback loop of emotional connection and empathic responses. Conversely, when administrators overburden teachers and fail to appreciate their hard work and dedication, teachers are less likely to offer emotional or practical support in return.

7.2.2 Mesosystem

The mesosystem “comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 80). This is the connection with microsystem. For teachers as developing persons, the mesosystem consists of the transaction among students, other colleagues, and administrators in the school. Other people who positively participate in the environment also have a great impact on teachers’ empathy (Tao and Jiang, 2021). Therefore, the transaction between two participants in the school context is the research focus.

7.2.2.1 Collegial relations

In the field of education and psychology, empathy is regarded as a fundamental component of effective interpersonal relationships, leadership, and professional collaboration. Although many studies have concerned about empathy in teacher-student relationships, and leader-follower relationships, fewer focus on collegial relations (interactions among peers)—how to shape and maintain empathic behavior in educational settings.

Positive collegial atmosphere can help enhance psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), enabling individuals to express emotions, doubts and worries with freedom. The sense of psychological safety is correlated with a higher level of empathy since

it encourages open dialogues and express vulnerability (Carmeli et al., 2009). The findings revealed that both public-school teachers and private-institution teachers supported some experience sharing meetings, where they could learn from each other and expressed their ideas. They stressed that these seminars were an opportunity for them to establish a rapport. The findings corroborate the ideas of Ringwald and Wright (2021), who highlight that empathy plays a key role in the interpersonal relationship since it enables individuals to understand others' emotions and states and make proper responses. Empathy is correlated with the degree of emotional salinification and positive impact. However, when they resonate with others' distress, it predicts worsening of relations.

In contrast, a competitive, isolated and hierarchical environment often inhibits the expression of empathy, replaced by guardedness or emotional detachment. The nature of collegial empathy can vary from cultural and institutional contexts. In China, teaching positions in public schools are tenure-track, so the hierarchy is strict. Senior teachers often make new teachers do more tasks because of their positions, or they evade their own responsibilities. Although this trend has existed for a long time, many teachers choose to remain silent or give in because they are afraid of offending their superiors. This is not conducive to their long-term career development and will also intensify conflicts among colleagues. Unresolved conflicts or the harmful collegial environment may suppress empathy and lead to emotional withdrawal or depersonalization (Maslas & Leiter, 2016). It is suggested that empathic listening and uncritical dialogues can facilitate to relief professional divergences and enhance understanding (Tjosvold, 2018).

Hargreaves (2001) points out that collegial relations in schools perform in various ways. Some are superficial and performative, but some are genuine and emotion-richness. The latter is characterized as trust and emotional opening, which can

effectively foster empathy. Research demonstrates that common professional experiences such as teaching together or collaborative planning, can enhance empathic understandings between colleagues. Through collaborations, educators can gradually experience pressures, values, and emotional labors brought from each other's roles (Day & Leithwood, 2007). This mutual exposure can enhance cognitive empathy and promote collective emotional intelligence (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Additionally, peer guidance and practical communities can provide structural and interpersonal reflective opportunities, and it is identified that reflection is the key mechanism to cultivate empathy (Spilt et al., 2011)

7.2.2.2 Interaction with administrators

Empathy thrives in environments that support emotional openness, reflection and professional autonomy. School culture—affected by leader behavior and administrative practice, can promote or inhibit these conditions (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Actively listening, validating teachers' concerns and model care in their interactions can create an atmosphere of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). According to the results, a senior public-school teachers indicated that her leader seriously adopted her teaching suggestions and supported her in trying some new teaching methods. If they were effective, they would be promoted among other teachers. A consistent finding in literature discovered that supportive leaders with strong empathy can foster a kind of school culture, where teachers are more likely to display empathy (Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Louis et al., 2010). The quality of communication between teachers and administrators is important. Open and two-way dialogues can promote relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), enabling teachers to safely express vulnerability, seek support and devote emotion to the work. Administrators who positively allow teachers to participate in decision-

making, listen to their suggestions, and respect their emotional labor can help to build a professional culture that supports empathy at all levels.

In contrast, in systems where administrators focus on accountability, compliance, and performance metrics, teacher empathy may be damaged. Research has demonstrated that the performative school culture guided by test scores and strict policy implementation can reduce the emotional space teachers need to connect empathically with students (Ball, 2003; Day & Smethem, 2009). This system is common in private schools. Private school teachers argued that the amount of their teaching time depended on students' grades and parents' evaluations. If they received frequent complaints, their teaching time would be cancelled by school leaders. Therefore, in this high-pressure working environment, they resigned after working for a period. The findings supported the argument that when administrators are thought to be disconnected from the class or only limited to interact with evaluation or monitoring, teachers may feel unsupported or isolated in emotion, leading to empathic fatigue or burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

7.2.3 Exosystem

The exosystem, “encompasses the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not ordinarily contain the developing person, but in which events occur that influence processes within the immediate setting that does contain that person” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 80). In short, it refers to a wider socio system, such as the teacher-parent organization, the authority, and other social communities. In this study, the interaction in the exosystem focuses on teachers with experts and teachers with parents.

7.2.3.1 Modes of teacher-parent interaction

Empathy in educational contexts not only includes understanding students' experiences, but also contains recognizing the social and emotional realities of

their families (McAllister & Irvine, 2002). Teacher-student interactions cover the relational establishment and communication with educators and students' caregivers from formal meetings and emails to informal conversations and family visits (Epstein, 2011).

Interactional patterns may differ in terms of tone (supportive and interactive), frequency (occasional and continuous) and formats (face-to-face or online). These characteristics can directly influence the depth of trust and understanding, having an impact on the empathic insight a teacher may obtain.

In line with the findings, many public-school teachers reported that they preferred to face-to-face communication with parents. They believed that parental meetings and home visits can provide a rich space for non-verbal cues, emotional expressions, and interpersonal establishment. This echoed the research from Christenson and Sheridan (2001) that such situation can help enhance mutual understanding and allow teachers to personalized family environments, thereby bringing more empathic and individualized pedagogies. Given the special nature of private institutions, the participants tended to digital communication as they should provide feedback to parents of every student they taught. Although online communication might lead to a lack of emotional depth of in-person exchange, it was an effective way to save time, particularly for those educators with heavy workloads. Olmstead (2013) argues that when digital communication is individualized, consistent and two-way, it can still foster empathy by regularly providing opportunities to understand parents' viewpoints.

Some forms of parental interactions can enhance empathy, while others may create nervousness and emotional stress. Communicating with critical,

demanding, or disengaged parents may pose an emotional burden on teachers, particularly in private institutions. As parents pay expensive tutoring fees, their demands would also increase. If their children's grades did not meet expectations, or they were not satisfied with the teacher's teaching, they would constantly complain to the institution and even asked to replace the teacher. Their demands would bring invisible pressure to the teacher. Therefore, if teachers cannot gain adequate support, their empathic capacity may be diminished (Hargreaves, 2000). Under these situations, empathy requires emotional regulation and professional reflections especially in high-risk or conflict-prone conversations (O'Connor, 2008).

7.2.3.2 School resources

School resources can be broadly divided into human resources, material resources, time resources, and emotional resources. These resources can shape working conditions, either supporting teachers' abilities to engage emotional responses and empathic practices or constraining their abilities (Day & Gu, 2010).

The physical environment where teacher work can influence their emotional health and professional behavior. Schools with poor infrastructures, limited classroom spaces or insufficient learning materials may raise a chronic sense of frustration and fatigue, thereby inhibiting empathic reactions (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Due to the limited space and funds of private institutions, teachers often needed to prepare teaching materials by themselves. Some participating teachers also reported that there was no multimedia equipment in the classroom, which made them very time-consuming during lesson preparation and teaching, reducing learning efficiency. Interestingly, the data revealed that in under-resource schools, teachers often encounter problems like crowded classrooms, excessive workloads, and insufficient scheming time, all of which may diminish emotional availability (Hargreaves, 1998). Empathy requires emotional devotions, concentrations and cognitive spaces for reflections on students' needs. Therefore,

without adequate time to communicate with students in persons, teachers may tend to behavioral management rather than relational interaction, diminishing their empathic competence. Also, a lack of time can increase teachers' pressure, and reduce opportunities to mediate emotions, particularly in disadvantaged schools (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Another issue of private institutions is that teachers have fewer opportunities to attend professional training. Public-school teachers stated that they were regularly assigned to participate in teacher training outside the school where they could have access to counselors, psychologists, learning specialists, and teaching assistants allows teachers to share the emotional and instructional load. They believed that they acquired a lot and could utilize what they have learnt in their further teaching. An increase in self-confidence can foster their empathy, which can facilitate their professional development and students' learning. Teachers who exhibit confidence are more likely to engage in problem-solving strategies, experience lower levels of job burnout and positively influence student engagement during the learning process (Zhang, 2022). However, when such support is lacking, teachers are often expected to address students' academic and emotional needs without adequate training or resources, which can lead to emotional overload and reduce empathic engagement (Spilt et al., 2011).

7.2.4 Macrosystem

The macrosystem "is defined as an overarching pattern of ideology and organization of the social institutions common to a particular culture or subculture" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 81). It represents the social environment in which teachers implement their work in accordance with specific policy, values, norms, and cultural concepts. As for the participant teachers in this research, the educational policy reform, the economic status, and the cultural concept have a great impact on their expressions of empathy.

7.2.4.1 Policy

Despite traditional views on empathy as a personal trait or an interpersonal skill, recent scholarship acknowledges that empathy also broadly affected by systems and institutional force, including educational policy (Paterson & Larios, 2021). Empathy in education is not simply an innate trait but a social construction and professional practice (Zembylas, 2007). The capacity to teacher empathy is rooted in structures, expectations and norms defined by policy. Policy related to the curriculum, assessment, teacher evaluation, tolerance and professional development, can both promote and constrain the space of empathy engagement.

Policy related to the curriculum, assessment, teacher evaluation, tolerance and professional development, can both promote and constrain the space of empathy engagement (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). For example, the reform of National English Curriculum incorporated affect and attitude in teaching, therefore, the public-school teachers began to concern about how to adopt emotional strategies to motivate students. The participant teachers asserted that they need to tailor their teaching strategies in accordance with the curriculum. They believed that the "teaching with emotion and happy teaching" approach advocated in the education reform has improved the traditional situation of "valuing knowledge over emotion", allowing them to fully demonstrate the positive factors in the teaching materials and cultivate students' rich emotions.

Conversely, private institutions keep traditional teaching patterns, and mainly impart knowledge. This is because students come here aiming to improve academic performance, thus the goal of private institutions is examine-oriented. Some participant teachers argued that they intended to adopt different classroom activities to enhance interaction between students to make the class lively. Due to the time limit and enrolment pressure from students, they had to give up this idea.

Mechanoreceptive exercise about examinations can impair students' learning positivity but also increase teachers' burnout. When curriculum design cannot meet teachers' expectations, their empathy might be constrained (Lubiz-Nawrocka, 2019). Echoing previous research that (Meyers et al., 2019; Zhang, 2022) the educational policy has a great influence on teacher empathy. When policies prioritize testing and academic achievement over emotional support, teachers may feel pressured to reduce the time and energy spent on empathetic engagement, potentially leading to emotional dissonance and frustration.

One of the most cited policy barriers to teacher empathy is the rise of high-risk accountability. According to the accountability of examinations, efficacy and the rigid standard often led to instrumental teaching, where educators feel stressful and prioritize measure outcomes rather than comprehensive understandings (Day & Smethem, 2009). Under these conditions, teachers may lack time, flexibility, or emotional bandwidth to empathically interact with students (Hargreaves, 2000). Noddings (2012) highlights that institutional support is crucial for the maintenance of caring teaching; if policy is not consistent with relational goals, it is difficult to maintain empathy.

7.2.4.2 Economical issues

Recent studies emphasize sociocultural and economic dimensions of empathy, believing that empathy is not only affected by values and training but also influenced by material conditions, including the level of income. Empathy in teaching involves continuous emotional devotion, such as perspective-taking, emotional labor and relational caring (Zembylas, 2007). Such labor requires devotions of time, energy and emotion. However, when teachers are faced with economic pressures, job instability or dissatisfaction with income, all of them can be undermined (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Therefore, empathy cannot be seen as detached from socioeconomic context, but as embedded within it.

One of the most direct ways about the impact of income on empathy is job burnout. Lower-income teachers often report a higher level of pressure, a decrease in job satisfaction and emotional fatigue (Klusmann et al., 2008). This may lead to a phenomenon of compassionate fatigue—repeatedly undertaking emotional needs, plus insufficient support, may weaken the capacity of empathy. For most private-institution teachers, economic conditions are their priority to stay in the position. The interviewees mentioned that the generous income of private institutions could guarantee their living. Meanwhile, their income was proportional to the number of class hours. If they could ensure the quality of teaching and gain recognition from parents and students, sales colleagues would also give them priority in scheduling classes. The findings proved that adequate salaries could create conditions for empathy thriving. Teachers with sufficient income often have higher career autonomy, motivation and well-being, which in turn supports their emotional devotions to students (Day et al., 2007). In a word, economic security enables educators to invest more fully in the emotional and relational dimensions of their work.

On the contrary, public-school teachers argued that teachers should not be utilitarian. This is also because the salary mechanism of public schools is different from that of private schools. Public schools are non-profit government institutions, so teachers' salaries are fixed, and there is no such thing as more work, more pay.

In Chinese culture, teachers are often compared to 'candles' or 'gardeners', which reflects the high moral standards teachers are endowed with. Teachers are educated to possess spirits of devotion and self-sacrifice and make contribution to their careers. It can also be seen from the statements of the two teachers that their moral conventions are stronger than those of the teachers in private schools.

Sharma et al. (2014) argue that economic deprivation can change an individual's moral standards, causing them to be more willing to engage in unethical behavior for financial gain. People who feel financially deprived may judge less harshly those who cheat for financial reasons, suggesting that financial pressure may impair moral decision-making. This shift in moral standards may affect how individuals and organizations operate and may lead to a culture of unethical behavior in pursuit of financial stability. Therefore, economic deprivation can indirectly lead to a lack of empathy among teachers.

Furthermore, economic factors also influenced the social value orientation of public-school teachers and private-institution teachers. Social value orientation refers to an individual's preferences for how to allocate resources between themselves and others. It is often divided into two main types: prosocial (people who prioritize equal distribution and mutual benefit) and pro-self (people who focus on maximizing their own interests). This orientation affects how individuals view and respond to social situations, including their empathetic responses (Li et al., 2013).

7.2.4.3 Cultural norms and values

Empathy is often assumed to be a common human trait, but scholars increasingly argue that it is grounded in sociocultural construction (Hollan, 2012; Zembylas, 2007). 'Appropriate' emotional reactions and how to express emotional understandings differ significantly in different societies. Cultural values like collectivism or individualism, the ability to emotional expressions or the power distance can affect the way to convey and perceive empathy in the classroom (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

In the culture of collectivism, empathy is often exhibited through non-verbal support, maintenance of harmony and indirect communication. Teachers are more likely to prioritize group cohesion, showing care by fulfilling responsibilities rather than through overt emotional expression (Li, 2012). For instance, a public-school teacher learned that a student had a conflict with his family and observed that the student was depressed in class. She called the student to her office. The student began to cry. She did not say anything accusatory but hugged the student. In the interview, she mentioned that sometimes some actions were better than a thousand words, allowing students to feel that they were cared for. Unexpectedly, some teachers in private institutions also reported verbal affirmation as a strategy, which may reflect the influence of globalized teacher training programs. This blend of traditional and modern practices highlights the evolving nature of professional empathy in multicultural contexts. Despite under the same cultural background, there is a significant disparity in how teachers interpret and practice empathy and how students treat teacher' emotional responses.

Cultures with high power distance like China tend to maintain hierarchical relationships in educational settings. In such context, teacher authority is stressed, and emotional closeness between teachers and students may be limited by social norms (Hofstede, 2001). Teachers are more likely to regard empathy as a responsibility or protection rather than emotional exchanges. Two senior participant teachers from public schools argued that it was necessary to keep a distance with students. They believed that emotional distance is beneficial to class management and setting a strict image can prevent some misbehaviors. The findings agree with that teachers are regarded as authority figures, and there is no doubt to follow their guidance (Lagou, 2018), which may impede the exhibition of empathy. Cultural norms regarding authority may complicate this dynamic. When strict adherence to authority is more valued than empathic involvement, teachers'

emotional ability to communicate with students can be limited (Martinsone & Žydžiūnaite, 2023).

Confucianism, a corner stone of Chinese culture, emphasizes respect authority and hierarchy (Chen, 2022). This cultural norm can influence teacher empathy and encourage teachers to keep a distance with students but also care for their well-being. Influenced by the Confucian value, the participants claimed that teachers were responsible for providing support to address students' difficulties or help their learning and growth. The findings correspond to previous research that Chinese teachers' empathy is closely linked to moral obligation. Teachers who harbor a strong sense of morality are more likely to express empathy. This sense is often rooted in the traditional value of prioritizing others' well-being. Therefore, empathy is a crucial component of effective teaching in Chinese context (Hong, et al., 2022).

7.3 RQ3: What is the role of empathy in teachers' professional identity?

The chronosystem refers to the dimension of time in relation to human development. It considers how life events and social changes influence individuals in different life stages (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). These events may have a great impact on one's personal and professional development. Given this, the temporal factors, such as educational reforms, social expectations, and personal experiences can help explore the changes on teachers' professional identities and empathy in their career life within the broader educational context. A teacher's capacity for empathy may evolve as they gain experience, navigate personal challenges, adjust to shifts in educational policies or societal expectations, and shape their professional identities. Steffy and Wolfe (1997) categorize teacher development into six stages: novice teacher, apprentice teacher, professional

teacher, expert teacher, distinguished teacher, and emeritus teacher. Based on the participants' backgrounds, this study focuses on the first four stages to examine the interplay between their development of professional identities and empathy.

7.3.1 Phase 1: Novice teachers

A novice teacher one who has recently completed their teacher education and is in the early stages of their teaching career (Petty et al., 2016). Typically, the novice phase lasts for the first year of their career. During this period, novice teachers begin to navigate their roles in the classroom, to work independently, and to develop their teaching philosophy personal teaching style, and classroom management techniques (Freeman, 2011).

According to the research results, the participant teacher encountered negative emotional experiences at the beginning of their professions. The participants mainly experienced feelings of insecurity and vulnerability due to their lack of teaching experience. Vulnerability, a multidimensional emotional state, manifests in various contexts and is influenced by an individual's perception of their situation. It interacts with one's personal identity, beliefs, values, and abilities (Lasky, 2005). As novice teachers, the participants had limited teaching cognition and experience, leading to restlessness in unfamiliar environments. They often suffered from negative emotions such as confusion, frustration, and worry, which fueled self-doubt. This emotional dissonance may have resulted in stress and vulnerability, impacting their self-perception, evaluation, and identity (Zembylas, 2003). They faced an identity crisis, unsure of their competence for the role.

The connection between teacher identity and vulnerability is particularly significant during times of unexpected challenges and change (Bacova & Turner,

2023). Teacher vulnerability, in the context of identity, can arise from questioning one's professional reputation, experiencing self-doubt, and grappling with the complexities of maintaining a capable and qualified image in front of students (Light, 2020). These feelings of vulnerability may be amplified by societal changes, which can affect teachers' professional identity, their interactions with students, and their teaching methods (Song, 2016).

In terms of the participants' emotional experiences as a novice teacher, the study discussed how they saw the roles they engaged in their career life to help them construct their professional identities. In the early stages of their careers, the teachers interviewed indicated that they were mainly knowledge driven. They believed that as a teacher, the most important task was to teach every class well so that students could learn the knowledge they taught. Therefore, they believed that they were a knowledge disseminator or a knowledge leader at this stage.

Example 1-- phase 1: 'I think a teacher is to deliver knowledge to students.'

Traditionally, I think the teacher is a person who teaches and imparts knowledge to students. (Chen)

At the beginning, I think the teacher is an out putter and students are in putters to listen to the teacher. (Li)

Example 2 -- phase 1: 'I am a guide.'

I think the teacher could be a guide to lead students' learning. For example, when I taught a grammar point, I often gave them some examples to understand it. I prefer to help them master the knowledge points by guiding them instead of remembering by rote. (Ling)

Combined with the findings of their emotional experiences at this stage, they were extensively concerned about how to teach effectively but ignored the characteristics of different students. From their conversations, we can find that their focus is only on themselves, and their teaching is also teacher-centered, ignoring the fact that a truly effective class should be student-centered. This finding agrees with the idea that teachers who teach with a teacher-centered teaching method lack empathy because they cannot pay attention to the needs of students. Additionally, the findings discovered that teachers' emotional experiences were an essential factor that influences their ability to empathize. If teachers are overwhelmed by their own emotions, it might hinder their ability to make empathic responses to students (Zhang, 2022).

They suffered identity crisis since they trapped into self-doubt, and subconsciously believed that they were not competent in this job, even intended to give up. In accordance with the present results, previous research has proved that negative emotions like stress or a sense of inadequacy may challenge the formation of teacher identity, leading to a doubt in their capacity of being an educator (Lap et al. 2022). Novice teachers often encounter various emotional experiences from the process of transforming pre-training to full-time teaching. These emotions, from excitement and enjoyment to anxiety and frustration, play a crucial role in shaping their professional identities. The emotional reactions they experienced can promote or impede the development of their professional identities, influencing how they see their roles and responsibilities in the classroom (Chen et al., 2022). Combined with the influence of emotional experiences on the expression of teacher empathy, the above findings confirmed that teachers with weak professional identities will show a lower level of empathy towards students (Zhu, et al., 2019).

7.3.2 Phase 2: Apprentice teachers

Apprentice teachers are those who have gained limited teaching experience after participating in teaching practice for a period (Steffy & Wolfe, 1997), typically lasting two or three years. As the participants successfully transitioned from novice to apprentice teachers, they became capable of independently taking responsibility for designing and conducting teaching practices. They integrated their knowledge, taught with growing confidence, and became more energized in their careers. Their sense of professional identity strengthened as they adapted to their changing roles and work environments. During this phase, they continually reconstructed their identities through reflective practices, ensuring that they met the qualifications required to be effective teachers.

Since novice teachers are more likely to become emotional contagion, they had a hard time separating themselves from some emotions —immersing themselves in others' feelings and experiences. The finding confirms earlier research from O'Connor (2008) that affective empathy can blur the boundary between professional caring and excessive emotional engagement, which may damage role clarity and objectivity. This situation is commonly seen in novice professionals who lack emotional regulation strategies.

An important sign that means teachers have progressed from novices to apprentices is that they know how to regulate their emotions, especially negative emotions. At this stage, self-regulation plays a very important role. According to Brown and Palincsar (1989), the competence of self-regulation improves with ages. Namely, teaching experience is the prerequisite for teachers to be equipped with this ability.

After experiencing an identity crisis during the novice period, the increase in self-regulatory ability prompted their identity reconstruction. With increasing familiarity and sense of accomplishment in their professional knowledge, they began to shift to student-centered teaching and enjoyed the joy that comes with the early stages of their careers.

Example 3 -- phase 2: 'I am a happy teacher.'

Students feel excited and happy when they attend my class. One of my students took two English lessons on the weekend. His mother told me that the other lesson was held by his head teacher in the public school. He was afraid of offending her, so he must attend that lesson. But he was willing to your lessons and more motivated. (Jia)

Personally, I am a happy and humorous teacher. I always got along with my students. If I stood on the students' place, I believed that they could understand what I taught. I could be a reliable person for them. (Xiong)

As discussed in case studies, the teachers displayed empathy by understanding and building a rapport with students. With the development of empathy, their professional identities were reconstructed. Individuals who are empathic toward themselves and others are more likely to understand different perspectives and experiences. This empathic involvement can enhance self-reflection and foster one's views on struggles and aspirations with empathy, ultimately promoting more profound identity transformation (Baseer et al., 2024). Self-reflection is the mechanism for individuals to reconstruct their identities. By reflecting their thoughts, emotions and experiences, they can deeply understand their identities and how the identities develop. This reflective practice allows people to profoundly recognize one's value, belief and narrative of shaping the identity (Lap, et al., 2022).

Reflecting on emotions can also trigger empathy. By engaging in reflective practices, teachers gain a deeper understanding of their emotions, beliefs, and teaching methods, fostering self-awareness and growth in their roles (Protassova et al., 2021). This self-awareness, developed through reflection, can enable teachers to empathize with students more effectively, understand their needs, and respond with compassion (Rieckhoff et al., 2020). Additionally, the participants sought to manage their emotions, stress, and responses, which is essential for remaining calm and supportive in the classroom. When teachers build self-regulation strategies—such as identifying their emotions, practicing mindfulness, or creating calming classroom environments—they not only improve their own well-being but also equip students with valuable tools for managing their emotions (Hadwin et al., 2017).

7.3.3 Phase 3: Professional teachers

The role of professional teachers appears during the time that educators' confidence significantly increases. Students' feedback plays a crucial role at this stage, and teachers feel happy to interact with students. Professional teachers emphasize and observe colleagues' teaching practice, realizing the importance of reflection on professional development (Steff & Wolfe, 1997). However, Identity is not static, but dynamic, socially constructed and often contested (Beijaard et al., 2004). When teachers feel stressful in their roles, beliefs, values and expectations, identity conflicts will emerge. These conflicts may derive from institutional pressure, policy change, emotional labore and the mismatch between personal and professional values (Kelchtermans, 2005; Sachs, 2001).

The transition from apprentice teachers to professional teachers marks a significant career advancement as participants began to find joy in teaching, build positive relationships with students, and collaborate effectively with colleagues.

They developed a sense of well-being from both teaching and the work environment. This aligns with findings that interpersonal relationships and the workplace environment are key factors influencing teacher well-being, which in turn affects professional identity (Bermejo, 2013). Furthermore, numerous studies have identified a close link between teacher empathy and well-being, showing that empathy can reduce stress levels and enhance mental health (Zhang, 2022). Through the descriptions of the participating teachers, we can find that their professional abilities have been continuously improved, and they have achieved excellent results at this stage. They have been valued by school leaders and praised by parents and students.

However, the improvement of ability also means the increase of responsibilities and tasks. Too many tasks, especially those not related to teaching, brought them more pressure and troubles, leading to job burnout. Hobfoll and Shirom (2000) describe burnout as the result of sustained work pressure. As the participants argued that their time and energy are limited, they cannot balance teaching and other work at the same time.

Example 4--phase 3: 'I do not think we need to undertake work irrelevant to teaching.'

I really felt that my whole state will be divided. When I must manage and teach at the same time, I may not be able to balance your energy. So, in the last stage, I really wanted to escape. I just wanted to teach. (Liu)

I really don't want to stay in this school any longer, because our school often requires teachers to do outdoor publicity when recruiting students, such as handing out flyers or making phone calls. I don't think this should be a teacher's job. (Chen)

They encountered identity conflicts at this stage (the contradiction between self-conception and the actual identity). They believed that the teacher role was only relevant to teaching and the extra work was not their responsibility. Under this circumstance, they suspected whether they should continue current professions. The conflict between their ideal identity and actual identity indicates that their expectations cannot be fulfilled, which may create psychological struggles. Competing demands raised by identity conflicts may deplete individuals' resources, leading to increased emotional exhaustion as they struggle to balance these conflicting roles within the workplace (Ostermeier et al., 2023).

Empathic teachers were more likely to feel burned out because they not only put emotions into students' well-being but also other relevant persons in the workplace. When teachers suffered stress from a heavy workload, they might feel their professional identities were challenged since it is difficult to simultaneously fulfill students' emotional and academic needs. The results mirrored that the school culture is a critical factor that influences teachers' professional identities. At the school level, school policy and its hidden emotional rules can cause continuous emotional labor, leading to an increase in negative emotions and diminishing the development of professional identity (Yuan & Lee, 2016).

When individuals are faced with contradictions between self-conception and external expectations or experiences, identity conflicts often occur. However, these conflicts may become innovative catalyst, promoting them reevaluate their identities (Ibarra, 2003). If they could overcome challenges of identity conflicts, they would construct new identities and hold a new attitude towards their jobs.

Some participants chose to relinquish some of their roles to improve work efficiency. Their ideal was to focus solely on teaching practice. Aware of the conflict between their various professional identities, participants employed self-regulatory strategies to reduce these contradictions, such as resigning from certain positions or requesting to reduce their workload. Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate self-regulation skills (Bouffard-Bouchard et al., 1991). The relationship between self-efficacy and self-regulation is crucial in shaping individual learning behavior, academic achievement, and overall success.

In accordance with previous results, previous studies have proved that identity conflicts can promote adaptive growth, encouraging individuals to face challenges and adapt to new environment (Tomkins & Adger, 2004). When encountering these conflicts, they can develop new skills, perspectives and resilience. This kind of growth is essential for them to reconstruct identities in the constantly changing living environment, eventually leading to greater psychological well-being (Ryff, 2013). Importantly, it has been demonstrated that identity reconstruction is an iterative process influenced by ongoing experiences and reflections (Whitehead, 2006). Individuals constantly negotiate their identities to address new challenges, thereby keeping flexibility and adaptability overtime. This dynamic means that identity conflicts is not only an obstacle, but also an integral component of personal growth and development.

7.3.4 Phase 4: Expert teachers

Expert teachers are distinguished by their high level of teaching proficiency, significantly influencing student outcomes, especially among disadvantaged students. They possess a deep understanding of instructional practices, the ability to adapt their teaching methods to maximize student potential, and the

capability to make informed decisions based on content, student behavior, and learning styles (Findell, 2008).

In line with the findings, the participant teachers at this stage hoped to contribute to education through their efforts and experiences. Related their previous experiences, they intended to help younger teachers in professional growth. When they assumed leadership roles, they focused more on overall teaching effectiveness and teacher achievement. The findings corroborate that leader teachers provide emotional and professional support to less experienced teacher by offering constructive feedback with compassion, there by strengthening team cohesion and reducing professional isolation (Kutsyuruba et al., 2021).

Example 5 – phase 4: ‘I want to help young teachers.’

I want to do some research to inspire young teachers. I think I either do not do this research project, or I just do it well. it must be beneficial to the entire industry, the entire school, or the teachers in the entire team. It can play a certain role in helping or guiding others’ teaching. (Zhai)

As a senior teacher, I am very willing to share my experience with young teachers. I hope to help young teachers to overcome professional struggles. I want to increase the cohesion of our team to help everyone make progress and develop together. (Wang)

Teachers at this stage no longer pursue personal progress but seek common professional development among their peers. As team leaders, they pay more attention to the interests of the group. They demonstrated empathy to show concerns about young teachers’ professional development. Empathic leaders not only benefit for individual relationships but also facilitate to create an innovative educational setting, making every member feel that they are capable to make a

positive contribution (Tzouramani, 2017). This empathic culture can continuously improve teaching practices over time. Furthermore, empathy help leaders to create a safe space for collaboration, feedback, and shared learning experience (Klar et al., 2024). When teachers feel supported by empathic leaders, they are more likely to take risks in their teaching practices and constant improvement. Engaging with empathy- both toward self and others can promote identity reconstruction during difficult situations (Neff & McGehee, 2010). A similar experience can trigger the mentor teacher to recall what she has experienced, and utilized her experiences to help others, particularly when encountering difficulties.

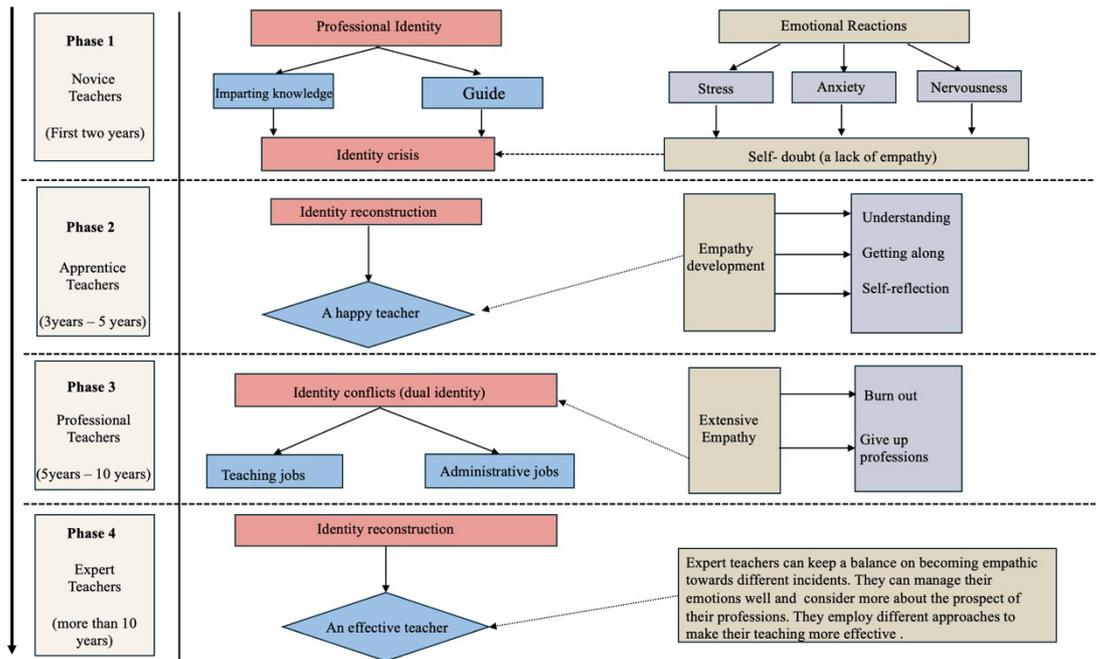
7.3.5 A model of changes in professional identity within empathy from a longitudinal perspective

Based on participants' emotional reactions to workplace events, a model was developed to illustrate how empathy and professional identity evolve longitudinally. The model of teacher empathy and professional identity, presented in Figure 7.1, draws on the theoretical foundations discussed in the literature review and the empirical findings of this study. It reflects the idea that identity is fluid, dynamic, and shaped by various social and interpersonal relationships through processes of social negotiation and construction (Varghese et al., 2005; Yang & Bautista, 2008; Morgan, 2010). Notably, this model was summarized from the research data with a small number of samples, related to personal specific experiences, which may not be general to all studies on empathy and teachers' professional identity.

To clarify the different phases of identity development, examples from the fieldwork are provided, highlighting the roles participants identified with at various stages of their professional journey. These examples demonstrate how teachers defined themselves through various societal roles, aligning with role theory, which suggests

that social roles carry specific expectations that guide individual behavior in different contexts (Biddle, 1986).

Figure 7.1: A model of teacher empathy and professional identity



Phase 1, the participant teachers experienced more negative emotions at the beginning of their career, such as stress, anxiety and nervousness. As novice teachers, they paid more attention to teaching and aimed to make their teaching well and impart enough knowledge to the students. They believed that they acted as a guide or tutor to teach this subject. Due to unfamiliarity with teaching process, they often showed nervousness in class, which led to anxiety about whether they were capable to teach this module.

Phase 2, After the participants gradually adapted to the working environment and the career, their negative emotions significantly reduced. Since they have learnt

how to reflect on their teaching and behavior, through which they can constantly improve themselves. Attending reflective practices enables novice teachers to address their emotional experiences and understanding how these experiences can form their professional identities. Reflection can help them understand challenges, recognize growth and combine their personal values and educational beliefs with teaching practice (Walkington, 2005). In addition to teaching reflections, they began to express concerns on students, such as how to get along with students, how to conduct teaching based on students' situations, and how to provide emotional support and resolutions when students had difficulties. Meanwhile, when they felt bad, they can regulate their own emotions. Such progress and changes allowed them to enjoy their jobs and increases their wellbeing.

Phase 3, with a blooming increase in teaching competence, the participants were endowed with more responsibilities. The school often assigned tasks to them that were not associated with teaching, and teachers needed to undertake some administrative work, such as organizing teaching seminars or recruiting students in the new semester. The high-intensive workload made most teachers exhausted. They indicated that they could not do well in multiple working tasks. These additional tasks might have a negative impact on their teaching quality, but their sense of morality and responsibility drove them to complete all the tasks conscientiously and effectively. Becoming too considerable might lead to burn-out in their current positions.

Phase 4, After experiencing identity conflicts, the participants regulated themselves and became confident to continue their job. They argued that they have been teaching English for several years and it is difficult to start a new job. They were afraid that they would encounter more challenges. Both internal and external factors triggered the identity conflicts. This finding echoes previous research that

teachers would create identity conflicts if they experienced the contradiction between self-conception and external expectations. These conflicts can be exhibited under different situations, such as personal life changes, a heavy workload, career transformation and social stress (Mack, 2018). Therefore, in addition to self-regulation, the participants attempted to change a new working environment or give up part of extra work.

7.5 Relationship between findings and prior research

The findings from the current study offer robust empirical support while also extending and challenging existing scholarship on empathy in teaching. Below is a thematic synthesis of how the research findings relate to prior literature across multiple dimensions.

The study reaffirms that empathy in teaching is not a static trait, but a dynamic relational process, encompassing cognitive empathy (perspective-taking), affective empathy (emotional resonance), and behavioral empathy (empathic response), which aligns with research results from Decety & Jackson (2004) and Davis (1996). By integrating the component of self-regulation (the ability to manage own emotional states and maintain empathy), it adds nuanced differences, consistent with Zembylas' (2007) viewpoints and expanding on Heberlein & Saxe's (2005) critique of the traditional cognitive-affective dichotomy.

Findings support established perspectives (e.g. Cornelius-White, 2007; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020) that teacher empathy can enhance student engagement, academic outcomes, and mental health. There are also some new insights from the results, revealing that how empathy is stimulated in the emotional charged contexts such as academic failure and family conflict and providing specific examples, which can

deepen an understanding of activation factors of empathy in Chinese educational settings.

Moreover, the findings also strengthen theories about the formation of empathy and professional identity. The stage development mirrors the pattern of Wolfe (1997) and Zembylas (2003) related to from novice teachers to expert teachers, whose co-construction of professional identity and emotional experience constantly develop through reflections, risks, and adaptations. The study offers a longitudinal model in terms of professional identity and empathy, connecting empathic development with identity growth, and filling the gaps of previous models that focused on abilities rather than emotion.

The comparison of public schools with private institutions echoes findings from Hargreaves (2000) and Day & Smethem (2009) that how institutional cultures, workloads and accountability pressures influenced the expression of empathy. It provides a new cultural and contextual insight, discovering that how Confucian values, collectivism, and the power distance affects the ways that Chinese teachers manage emotional closeness with students (see Chan & Rao, 2009; Hofstede, 2001).

The research also supports theories by Hochschild (1983) and Maslach & Leiter (2016) that emotional labor in teaching, particularly in the context with emotional depression, may lead to burnout and reduce empathic competence. If there is no emotional regulation to balance empathy, it may become a rooted source of emotional exhaustion, especially in emotionally suppressive environments.

Data analysis related to the relationship between empathy and colleagues/parents is complementary findings that demonstrated that empathy can strengthen teacher-parent partnerships (Epstein, 2011; Edwards & Kutaka, 2015) and collegial relations (Kelchtermans, 2009; Stoll et al., 2006). It recognizes that empathy between colleagues can facilitate to reduce professional isolation and promote community cohesion-- a topic underexplored in empathy literature, which often centers on teacher-student interactions.

Finally, the study validates policy, and resource constraints are empathy inhibitors (e.g., Ball, 2003; Noddings, 2012). The current findings illustrate how they function in practices from a micro level, particularly in private institutions. A unique insight is to draw attention to how economic pressures, rigid policy and technological disparities influence the emotion bond that teachers need to engage in empathy-- an intersection of economics and empathy that has received limited attention.

7.6 Conclusion

In sum, this chapter demonstrated that teacher empathy is not a static trait but a dynamic and environment-related process, grounded in the ecological system. In the microsystem, empathy derives from daily class interactions, driven by teacher belief, emotional experience, autonomy and self-reflection. In the mesosystem and exosystem, collegial relations, administrative support, parent engagement and institutional resources significantly affected how empathy is expressed and constrained. The macrosystem, including policy, economic pressure and cultural values, further shapes the conditions under which empathy becomes a professional practice and source of emotional labor.

Additionally, from novice teachers to expert teachers, the development of empathy in professional identities at different stages indicates that emotional experiences, identity struggles and reflective practices play a vital role in forming the relationships between teachers and others. Importantly, the research results stress that fostering empathy in education requires systematic support: school culture with emotional safety, appropriate training, policy adjustment and sufficient resources. Only through such comprehensive support can empathy flourish a power of teaching and relations, not only benefiting teaching, but also students and the broader school community.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the interplay between empathy and language teacher professional identity in Chinese secondary education from an ecological perspective. Experienced English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers from public schools and private tutoring institutions were selected to participate in this qualitative research. The study aimed to explore three key aspects: 1) the situations in which teacher empathy may emerge through interactions with various individuals in the teaching profession; 2) the ecological factors that influence expressions of empathy; and 3) the role of teachers' empathic experiences in shaping their professional identity.

This chapter provides a summary of the thesis. It begins with a restatement of the initial rationale for the research, followed by an outline of the literature review, which informed the formulation of the research questions, and the selection of methodology used to address these questions. Next, a synopsis of the study's findings will be presented. The limitations of the research will also be briefly discussed, along with suggestions for further areas of investigation. Finally, the contributions and limitations of the study will be reviewed.

8.1 Empirical findings

Currently, there is a lack of research on empathy and in-service teacher development in the context of Chinese secondary education, particularly among teachers in private tutoring institutions. This study addresses this gap in teacher narrative research.

This research stems from three interrelated areas of interest. First, it explores the situations in which English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers might exhibit empathy in their interactions with various people (students, colleagues, parents, and family members) within the ecological system. Second, it examines the ecological factors that influence teacher empathy and compares how public-school teachers and private institution teachers express empathy. Third, the study investigates the role of empathy in constructing or reconstructing teacher professional identities from a longitudinal perspective.

As discussed in Chapter 3, empathy has been a controversial concept, with various definitions and categorizations across different fields (Davis, 1983; Hoffman, 1982; Hogan, 1969; Barrett-Lennard, 1962; Hoffman, 1984a; Howe, 2013). It has been conceptualized as a trait, skill, ability, emotion, or strategy (Batson et al., 2004; Davis, 1990; Ickes, 2011; Kynyk & Olson, 2001). Drawing inspiration from related research in education and psychology, this study explored empathy as a specific element of emotion, following Oxford's (2016) theoretical model, which conceptualizes empathy as an emotion. However, there is a lack of empirical studies investigating empathy in language teachers.

Oxford (2016) noted that there is no established theoretical framework for studying teacher empathy in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Therefore, this study drew on and compared theoretical perspectives related to emotion research, ultimately adopting the ecological systems perspective. The rationale for this choice is as follows:

First, cognitive research on emotion views it as a psychological experience encompassing evaluation, subjective feelings, physiological changes, emotional

expression, and behavioral tendencies (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Schumann, 1997; Goleman, 1995). Cognitive researchers often use quantitative methods to establish correlations between emotions and other variables but tend to overlook the underlying factors that might trigger different emotions in individuals. In SLA research, while cognitive approaches help explain the principles of emotion generation in foreign language teachers, they focus too heavily on internal psychological processes and neglect the social and cultural influences on emotional expression.

Second, sociocultural scholars often employ qualitative methods, such as case studies and ethnography, to examine how social culture, school management, and professional regulations impact teacher emotions (Kemper et al., 2000). This perspective shifts the focus towards how macro factors, such as societal and cultural contexts, shape teacher emotions (Hargreaves, 2000; Yin, 2007; Van Lier, 2004). However, this approach often overemphasizes external environmental factors while ignoring individual, personal aspects of emotions.

Third, post-structuralist approaches explore teacher emotions in terms of cultural and political dimensions. They suggest that teacher emotion is both a practice of discourse and a carrier of interaction between teachers and society, playing a role in criticism and transformation (Zembylas, 2005; 2011). While poststructuralism provides insights into what emotions can do, it lacks detailed explanations of the internal processes involved in emotion formation.

Considering the limitations of these three perspectives, this study adopted the ecological systems theory, which integrates both individual and contextual factors to investigate how teachers' emotions are generated (Schutz, 2014; Schutz

et al., 2006). This perspective recognizes that emotion is dynamic, systematic, and interactive, shaped by the interaction of teachers' identity, beliefs, goal setting, and their ecological environment at various levels. Given the dynamic nature of identity construction, narrative inquiry was selected as a suitable approach for this study, as it allows for the exploration of life history over time. Life history is chronological and reveals the ways in which teachers construct and reconstruct their identities in unpredictable contexts, providing insight into how individuals make meaning of their experiences (Benmayor & Skones, 1994).

A predominantly qualitative approach was adopted to answer the research questions, with the goal of producing rich descriptions of teachers' experiences with empathy and how they exhibit it in their daily work. The research examined the situations that generate empathy, identified the dominant factors influencing teacher empathy, and explored how professional identities shift in relation to empathic experiences. The primary research tool was semi-structured interviews, designed to explore the emergence of empathy across various scenarios and to elicit participants' emotional responses. Additional data were gathered through classroom observations and focus groups to ensure triangulation. The fieldwork spanned six months and involved ten participants, each with at least five years of teaching experience, from both public and private educational settings. As the researcher, I assumed the role of observer in the schools. Data analysis involved coding the transcripts of interviews and focus groups, using both internally generated codes from the data and externally derived codes from established theories. These codes helped identify significant patterns and themes, as well as highlight illustrative excerpts termed 'critical incidents.'

In addressing Research Question 1 (RQ1), the findings indicated that teachers expressed empathy in different contexts when interacting with various individuals

within the ecological system. Teachers developed cognitive empathy and compassionate empathy by recognizing students' negative emotions and responding with emotional support. Cognitive empathy allowed them to deeply understand students' struggles, while compassionate empathy enabled them to respond with care and assistance. Empathy also played a crucial role in maintaining interpersonal relationships by fostering emotional connections. Teachers often initiated empathetic communication to ensure students felt heard and valued, facilitating rapport-building. Furthermore, empathetic teachers were able to resolve conflicts peacefully and ease tense relationships.

Empathy was also important in teachers' interactions with colleagues. The findings showed that empathy enabled teachers to share resources, feelings, and ideas, fostering mutual professional support. With empathy, teachers were more open to collaboration, recognizing that collective progress benefits their own development. However, emotional empathy can have a darker side; teachers may unconsciously absorb negative emotions from their colleagues. In such cases, cognitive empathy helped them manage their own emotions and regulate their responses.

When interacting with parents, empathetic teachers encouraged parental involvement in their children's learning. They communicated progress updates in a sensitive manner, using language that parents could easily understand while considering their emotional responses. Empathy made teachers more patient and inclusive in listening to parents' concerns and providing targeted guidance. Teachers also played a mediating role when conflicts arose between parents and their children. However, parents' high expectations sometimes caused teachers to experience stress and anxiety. Many teachers admitted feeling immense pressure due to demanding parental requirements.

Married teachers noted that family support motivated them to work more efficiently. They expressed gratitude and mutual understanding toward their families, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Respect and understanding within the family context helped teachers empathize with their students and colleagues. Specifically, teachers who were mothers found that their experiences as parents enabled them to connect more deeply with their students and show greater compassion.

In response to Research Question 2 (RQ2), the comparative analysis between public school and private institution teachers revealed that micro factors such as beliefs, emotional experiences, autonomy, and teaching activities influenced their empathy. At the mesosystem level, differences in school culture were evident due to varying policy requirements. Public school teachers felt less supported due to heavy workloads, which negatively impacted their teaching. Additionally, public schools' hierarchical structures sometimes led to bullying by senior teachers, further reducing empathy. Private institution teachers, on the other hand, had more opportunities to engage with parents and provide individualized feedback due to smaller class sizes. As a result, they displayed deeper empathy, whereas public school teachers used functional empathy to address group needs. Policy reform and economic factors in the exosystem also influenced private institution teachers' empathy. Since their income was tied to the number of lessons they taught; some teachers felt pressure to feign empathy to meet the expectations of students and parents.

In response to Research Question 3 (RQ3), the findings identified the role of empathy in shaping teacher identity, particularly during periods of identity crisis, conflict, and reconstruction. Empathy helped teachers navigate these challenging moments, enhancing their sense of professional identity. It acted as a

mediating factor that encouraged self-reflection on teaching practices and personal emotions, especially during times of vulnerability and burnout. Moreover, empathy promoted self-awareness, enabling teachers to better understand their students and respond compassionately. Importantly, empathy reduced stress levels and improved teachers' mental health, contributing to their overall well-being in the profession.

In sum, empathy is an inseparable part of teaching. It cannot only help to foster meaningful relations, but also shape teachers' nature and future. Fostering empathy requires institutional support, emotional resources, professional autonomy and reflective opportunities. As identified in this study, empathy can thrive in the emotionally sensitive environment but may also be affected in the rigid and performative teaching structure. Therefore, enhancing teacher empathy is not only issues about individual competence but also systematic devotions to the educational emotion and relations. These insights offer valuable implications for educational leaders, policymakers, and teacher educators aiming to create empathic, sustainable, and human-centered teaching cultures.

8.2 Implications

8.2.1 Theoretical implication

The study provides significant theoretical contributions to understand empathy in language teachers' professional identity by filling the key gaps of literature in the fields of applied linguistics, teacher education and emotion research.

The main aim of this study was to critically examine the situations in which teachers express empathy in interactions with various individuals related to their profession in two dominant Chinese secondary educational settings: public schools and private tutoring institutions. Based on a theoretical framework, the

researcher explored the factors influencing teachers' expressions of empathy within different ecological systems and how these empathic experiences contributed to the shaping and transformation of their professional identities. By integrating theories of emotion and empathy, this study provided empirical findings on the investigation of empathy from an emotional perspective within the realm of applied linguistics.

A major theoretical contribution of this study is to integrate empathy into broader frameworks of emotion and identity. Traditionally, empathy and emotion has been regarded as two distinct concepts (e.g., Bulter, 2011; van Kleef, 2009); empathy is often commonly simplified as a kind of psychological trait that can be measured through scales (Hall, & Schwartz, 2019), while emotion has been independently studied in teachers' cognitive and psychological fields. This study integrated dimensions of emotion and empathy, revealing that how empathic responses are embedded and affected in teachers' emotional labor and life experiences. By seen empathy as a dynamic and contextually influential process rather than a static trait, the study expands the understanding of this field.

Previous research on empathy has largely relied on quantitative methods, utilizing questionnaires or surveys to measure empathy or examine its relationship with other variables (e.g., Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004; Batson et al., 1997; Davis, 1983; De Corte et al., 2007). However, Hoffman (2018) argues that certain empathic experiences cannot be fully captured through simple quantitative measurement and analysis. As a vicarious emotion (Wondra & Ellsworth, 2015), empathy is not only a cognitive process but also a dynamic emotional experience. Therefore, it is often explored in qualitative studies of emotions (Horwitz, 2008; Mercer, 2016; Weisz et al., 2014; Zembylas, 2003).

This study also addresses a gap in qualitative research by investigating empathy as an independent element, as previous studies have primarily discussed it in relation to firsthand emotions. Heyes (2018) argues that empathy is not innate but is automatically triggered by social interactions. This is particularly relevant in teacher education, where teachers are constantly communicating with diverse individuals, leading to emotional intersections.

According to traditional classifications of empathy in education (Howe, 2013), it comprises cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. In relation to the potential model (Figure 3.3) of empathy in teacher-student interactions (Sun et al., 2023), teachers' cognitive and emotional systems are spontaneously activated when they recognize students' voices, actions, and facial expressions. The findings of this study align with this model to some extent, suggesting that cognitive empathy is foundational for teacher empathy. Teachers need to understand students' situations and emotional needs through cognitive evaluation before responding appropriately. However, cognitive empathy does not always trigger emotional responses. While Bernhardt & Singer (2012) argue that the activation of the mirror neuron system (MNS) in the brain allows teachers to experience similar emotions to their students, the findings indicate that teachers can offer support without necessarily engaging emotionally.

In language education, emotional empathy was not as prevalent among teachers as it is in fields such as nursing and healthcare (Wang & Kang, 2023). Notably, the study challenges the equation of emotional contagion with emotional empathy, which is overly simplistic (Zhang et al., 2016). Empathy includes both cognitive and emotional components, making it a more complex phenomenon. Cognitive empathy allows individuals to distinguish between their own emotions and those of others, helping them avoid being overwhelmed by others' emotional states

(Singer & Klimecki, 2014). For example, some participant teachers, when observing students struggling with similar language learning experiences, could recall their own past struggles. However, these memories did not induce pain; they allowed the teachers to momentarily revisit these emotions but quickly shift focus to help students overcome similar challenges. This illustrates the distinction between emotional empathy and emotional contagion.

In exploring the factors influencing empathy, this study employed a novel theoretical perspective—ecological systems theory—and provided a new framework for further research on teacher empathy. In comparing the empathy experiences of teachers in public schools and private tutoring institutions, this study highlighted differences in the mechanisms, policies, and external environments that influence empathy expression, offering new insights for future teacher training programs.

By applying Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory as a conceptual lens, the study provides a new approach to investigate empathy in microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. Although the ecological framework has been used in research of indent or school settings, this study first applied this perspective to understand how empathy is expressed, shaped and constrained in different institutional layers. The ecological analysis of multiple layers fills this theoretical gap, illustrating that empathy is not only interpersonal but also structural, and deeply influenced by institutional policy, cultural norms and power dynamics.

At the microsystem level, teachers’ beliefs, autonomy, and emotional experiences were identified as the primary factors contributing to individual differences in

empathy. Differences between public school and private tutoring institution teachers' empathic experiences stemmed from various ecosystem factors, particularly macrosystem influences, such as policies, economic issues, and cultural norms. These factors significantly impacted teachers' beliefs about their role and, consequently, their ways of displaying empathy. Through a longitudinal perspective, the study examined the interaction between teachers' empathy and professional identity over time. By analyzing life stories and experiences, the study demonstrated that empathy plays a crucial role in identity formation, particularly during key moments such as identity crises, conflicts, and reconstruction.

Moreover, the study expands the research of post-structuralism and narrative approaches to teacher identity, examining the process of how empathy evolves in different identical stages (from novices to experts). Previous researcher has explored identity reconstruction, but not sufficiently investigated the critical incidents about the trajectory of how empathic encounters shape identity. The study adopts narrative inquiry, showing how teachers interpreted empathy and gave meaning to empathic interactions and emotional experiences.

Contextually, the study discussed another theoretical gap is the test-oriented educational system (Chines Educational System), where there is a lack of understanding of contextualizing empathy. Despite emphasis on empathy research in western or intercultural backgrounds, this study discovered how cultural values, high-stake test pressure, and institutional hierarchy affected the production of empathy. Therefore, the research helps to construct a theory of teacher empathy rooted in culture, which can sensitively perceive the moral, political, and emotional dimensions of teaching in localized settings.

Perhaps, most importantly, the study reconceptualized empathy as an identity job, challenging the main-stream viewpoints regarding empathy an interpersonal skill. The findings indicated that empathic moments play a critical role in teachers' understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and moral goals. Empathy is not only the response to others but also a reflective process, through which teachers can negotiate who they are, who they want to be, and how they position themselves within institutional and social contexts.

8.2.2 Practical Implication

The study reveals how empathy is shaped and intertwined with teachers' professional identity in contexts, providing many practical suggestions for teacher education, school leadership, and policy design. The results offer actionable insights for improving teacher development and institutional practices in highly emotional and pedagogical settings.

First, enhancing teacher training programs. Empathy should be integrated into pre-service and in-service teaching training programs. The findings identified that teachers who are more emotionally aware of interpersonal interactions and able to reflect are more likely to build trust, reduce classroom conflicts and create a tolerant environment. Empathy development modules should include emotional literacy, perspective-taking and self-regulation training.

For example, it is essential to foster teachers' awareness of caring for and understanding students. Caring serves as the driving force for students' growth, while understanding is the key to unlocking their hearts. To truly care for students means to care for all of them—ensuring their safety, supporting their health, respecting their individuality, recognizing their ambitions, celebrating their strengths, encouraging their progress, trusting their actions, and being patient

with their mistakes. When students face challenges or difficult situations, offer them support, understanding, and help, treating them with patience, attentiveness, and kindness. When students make progress or achieve success, provide them with rewards, encouragement, and praise. Teachers should maintain high expectations while being fair and measured, helping students form a healthy outlook on life, the world, and their values.

Teachers can care for students in a variety of ways: in daily life, by regularly checking in on their well-being and offering material assistance to those with family difficulties; in their studies, by sparking interest in learning, fostering good study habits, and helping to improve academic performance; and spiritually, by nurturing their ideals, encouraging them to set goals, and motivating them to work hard toward their dreams. Morally, teachers should aim to understand students' values and guide them to become principled, kind individuals. Psychologically, teachers should strengthen emotional education, helping students develop positive, cheerful personalities and stable, optimistic mindsets.

"Comprehension-based teaching theory" mentioned that 'understanding students, teaching is in the heart' (Tang & Ma, 2003). Teachers are required to get closer to students, talk to them more, and listen to their voices. To understand students, we must first get close to the students, go deep into the students, understand their joys, sorrows, and joys from the students' speech, and know their interests and hobbies, to adapt to the students' active thinking and changing emotions. The truth is revealed in the subtleties. During conversations and interactions with students, some of their true psychological conditions will be discovered, which will help to carry out education in a targeted manner. Secondly, teachers and students think about problems from different perspectives. Teachers should analyze problems from the students' standpoint. Whenever there are deviations in students'

understanding and behavior, teachers will understand the reasons why students have certain thoughts and do certain things by thinking from their perspective. Therefore, when dealing with such problems, we will be tolerant, consider students, and not blame students for what they do. Finally, deeply understand the students' learning situation, put forward requirements at different levels, and provide necessary help. There must be corresponding standards for each student, so that through hard work, they can achieve significant improvement on the original basis.

Second, Respecting and trusting students. Teachers work with people who have unique personalities. Respect is the basis of love, and love is the embodiment of respect; without respect, there is no love, and without love, there can be no true respect. The two are complementary and harmonious. "Soviet educator Makarenko also said: "My basic principle is always to demand as much from a person as possible and to respect a person as much as possible. "These seniors have clearly warned us that teachers should treat every student with a democratic and equal mentality and respect every student. No matter whether the student is smart or dull, excellent, or stubborn. If he gives love, only then will love to be reciprocated. In this special period of physical and mental development, junior high school students often regard themselves as "little adults". In their eyes, they want to do everything that adults can do. Their independence and autonomy are gradually strengthening. They have quick thinking, active thinking, strong ambition, and strong self-esteem. Extremely eager to gain the respect and trust of teachers. Teachers must protect students' self-esteem and self-confidence and guide them correctly.

The sense of trust that teachers show towards students in their educational and teaching practice is what motivates them to improve. Especially for students who have been criticized for poor performance, teachers' trust is the best way to

encourage them to consciously overcome their shortcomings and strive for progress. No matter what mistakes students make, they must believe that they can improve and learn well. We must trust students' potential abilities and let them practice and grow through training. Only by trusting students can we fully mobilize students' initiative and enthusiasm and stimulate students' motivation to make progress. Teachers should always show respect and trust to students. Through a trusting look, a satisfied smile, and an encouraging comfort, students can often feel the teacher's love and transform it into the intrinsic motivation to receive education. In an atmosphere of mutual trust, students will develop a sense of identity with their teachers. Only by respecting and trusting students can we make the relationship between teachers and students more harmonious and grasp the pulse of students' thoughts in a timely manner.

Third, aligning curriculum with affective goals. Educational policy should not be seen empathy as a 'soft skill' secondary to academic outcomes. In contrast, curriculum reform, particularly in test-based educational systems like China should explicitly promote affective education and relational pedagogy as core components of teaching excellence.

In recent years, with the advancement of the new English curriculum reform and the implementation of new teaching materials, the traditional situation of "valuing knowledge over emotion" has been changed, and "teaching with emotion and teaching with pleasure" has been advocated: fully considering cognition in English teaching (English Curriculum Standards, 2022). Meanwhile, we also pay full attention to emotional factors and strive to play their positive role to improve teaching objectives, improve all aspects of teaching, optimize teaching effects, and promote the all-round development of students' comprehensive qualities.

Teachers should expand their ideas, divergent thinking, and flexibly adjust and grasp the content of teaching materials.

Developing the positive emotional elements of the teaching materials. The emotional factors contained in English teaching can cultivate students into modern people with rich emotions and noble sentiments. English teaching materials are the result of English science and human culture. Analyze and explore the emotional factors in the teaching materials and use the large number of emotional resources contained in the teaching materials to trigger students' positive emotional experiences. Each unit of New Target English (English Curriculum Standards, 2022) presents different topics to cultivate students' intellectual and emotional development: using different Chinese and foreign cultural customs to cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness; use the deeds of scientists who devote themselves to scientific research to help students establish a correct outlook on life; use current news about artists and Olympic athletes who have brought glory to the country to inspire students' national pride.

Forth, curriculum and pedagogy implications. The research results report that empathy can be fostered through curriculum design and teaching strategies. Teachers should be encouraged to design activities to promote emotional engagement. Classroom teaching is an important way to guide students to learn methods. It is also a link to guide the actual training and specific extension of learning content. It is the main position for implementing education and teaching. Teachers use love to water the classroom and use skills to improve the classroom, so that students can experience the joy and success of English learning.

Empathy can help teachers to create a relaxing and happy atmosphere. Every expression, tone, and body language of the teacher will have a great impact on the students' emotions. Therefore, teachers must first adjust their state before class, brew up their emotions, and keep themselves positive, optimistic, and positive. In a peaceful and stable teaching mood, we devote ourselves to teaching with strong energy, rich emotions, and good moods, creating a relaxed and pleasant teaching atmosphere for students, thus playing a good role in the entire classroom teaching.

When teaching, teachers cannot just follow the textbook and let me teach and you learn. This kind of boring class will only make students lose interest. Therefore, when teaching, teachers must first introduce novel teaching methods to arouse students' interest and allow students to quickly engage in learning. Moreover, empathic teachers appreciate their students, and often initiate their engagement and positivity in learning. To appreciate students is to stimulate their enthusiasm for learning by affirming their merits, through which students can internalize the requirements of education into individual conscious actions and develop lively, lively, healthy, and proactive development.

Fostering empathy enables teachers to use multi-level teaching and highlights individual differences. Stratified teaching means that teachers carry out teaching activities at different levels according to students' different learning levels and abilities and provide corresponding learning guidance according to the needs of students at different development levels, to achieve the teaching goal of all-round development of all students. Teachers' teaching activities (such as teaching objectives, teaching content, teaching methods, teaching time, teaching effects, etc.) should be based on content related to students' development (such as learning motivation, learning interest, learning content, learning methods, learning time, learning effects, etc.).

Finally, institutional support for emotional labor. Professional development should acknowledge teachers' struggles in emotion and identity, especially in the early or transitional career stage. Schools need to organize seminars to help teachers explore how empathy promote their constant development of a sense of mission, moral responsibilities and role poisoning. Collaborative learning opportunities such as peer coaching and case study discussions can help them explore emotional dilemmas and share empathy strategies.

The research proves that empathy is influenced and constrained by institutional factors such as workloads, policy pressure, rigid performance goals. Therefore, schools and institutions should reexamine the teacher evaluation system, regarding emotional labor as a legal and valuable aspect of teaching. School administrators should set an example of empathic leadership, encouraging open conversations and teacher-student relationships in terms of trust.

8.3 Limitations and further research

The study limitations and potential avenues for future research have been extensively addressed in relation to the research methodology and the findings, as well as in a broader context.

This study is grounded in Chinese sociocultural and educational backgrounds, including unique pressures, such as high-stake examinations, values of Confucianism, and recent policy changes. These factors influence teacher identity and empathy in ways that may not directly apply to systems with different cultural or policy environments. As with all qualitative and narrative studies, the

interpretation of researchers plays a key role in data analysis. Although we attempt to ensure the reliability through triangulation, member checks, reflective diaries, the research results are still influenced by the researcher's positionality, background and interpretive lens. Although the study achieved thematic saturation, the sample size was relatively small with a gender imbalance among participants, which may limit the diversity of perspectives, particularly related to how gender shapes empathy and professional identity in language teaching.

To build upon the above contributions of this study, future research can consider the following avenues. Expanding the research to international or cross-cultural comparison to reveal how different cultures, norms and policy shape empathy, such as comparing Chinese teachers with western teachers or other Asian teachers. To compensate deep narratives, researchers can adopt mixed approaches to study the broader tendency, balancing empathy development or statistically analyzing the relationships between empathy, identify, job satisfaction, and teacher well-being. Future research may explore students' perception of teacher empathy, thereby comprehensively understanding the level of acceptance in empathic pedagogy, and how it will influence student engagement, learning outcomes and emotional health. Furthermore, the research can evaluate the effectiveness of training programs that aims to foster empathy in teacher education, exploring how such interventions affect identity development, classroom practices, and emotional resilience. Given that the potential impact of genders in emotional expressions and caring work, further research can explore how gender intersects with empathy and professional identity among language teachers.

Despite limitations, this study contributes to the lack of intersections between empathy and teacher professional identity in applied linguistics. By emphasizing

the complex, contextual and emotional dimension of teaching, the study opens a deeper and more tolerant path to explore the meaning of becoming an empathic educator in increasingly demanding and dynamic educational settings.

Appendix 1: Consent Form

Study title: Narrative Inquiry into English Language Teachers' Empathy and Professional Identity: Comparative Case Studies in Chinese High Schools and Private Tutoring

Institutions

Researcher name: Yao Chen

ERGO number: 78907

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

<p>I have read and understood the information sheet (05/02/2023 version 2.0 of participant information sheet) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.</p>	<p>√</p>
<p>I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.</p>	<p>√</p>
<p>I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw (at any time) for any reason without my participation rights being affected.</p>	<p>√</p>

Name of participant (print name)..... Signature
of participant.....

Date.....

Name of researcher (print name).....

Signature of researcher

Date.....



Please tick (check) this box to indicate that you consent to taking part in this survey.

Appendix 2: A Sample of Observational Report

Date and Location: 18/04/2023, Public school Classroom

Description:

Topic, unit, and Grade	Grade 2, Unit 5 Working the Land
Other materials (and sources)	Textbook, exercise answer sheets, courseware with PowerPoint, and learning cards
Homework assigned	Writing a paragraph with the subject clause

	Lesson sequences	Activity types	Interaction/Language	Comment/questions

1	<p>Greeting and Introduction:</p> <p>The teacher introduced the learning goals, outcomes, topic and divided the students into several groups. She wrote down the group numbers on the blackboard for counting points. She emphasized that the first three groups will be awarded at the end of the class.</p>		TT (E)	
---	--	--	--------	--

<p>2</p>	<p>Lead-in:</p> <p>The teacher showed a picture on the screen and introduced the image related to the topic. She played a radio and asked the students to answer two questions after listening. Students actively answered the questions with hands up. After the tapped students gave the answers, the teacher asked other students to think about how to paraphrase the given sentences. According to their answers, the teacher led in other examples and asked students to find out the subject in each example.</p>	<p>TBA</p>	<p>TS (E)</p>	
-----------------	---	-------------------	----------------------	--

3	<p>Warm-up Exercise:</p> <p>Students are required to circle the subject in sentences on the screen together. Then, the teacher reminded them to consider the S4, and S5, because these two sentences used a clause as the subject. Finally, the teacher began to</p>	LE	TS (E)	
	<p>explain the definition of the subject clause.</p>			

<p>4</p>	<p>Explanation1:</p> <p>The teacher continued to explain the features of the subject clause and ask the students to see the leading words, like ‘how’, ‘what’. Then she asked them to complete the Exercise 1 on the answer sheet with 1 minute.</p> <p>(When the students were doing the exercise, the teacher walked around the classroom.)</p> <p>After the observation, she said, ‘have you finished?’ The students answered ‘yes’, and the teacher asked volunteers to stand up and show their answers.</p> <p>(The teacher also listed the key points on the blackboard.)</p>	<p>LE</p>	<p>TT (E, C)</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>Exercise 2: Translate and Summarize</p> <p>After explaining the leading words of the subject clause, the</p>	<p>LE</p>	<p>TS (E)</p>	

	<p>teacher used a form to classify them. She first asked students to translate the subject clauses and then invited volunteers to answer. On the screen, she used a form to classify the leading words and let all the students speak aloud the answers.</p> <p>Students are also asked to repeat these leading words again, and the teacher gave an indirect clue to remind them to pay attention to the sentence order of the subject clause.</p> <p>Another activity was that students needed to circle the verb of each given example and discover the rules. (Students answered the questions together about the subjectpredicate agreement.)</p>			
<p>6</p>	<p>Explanation 2: the formal subject 'it'</p>	<p>LE</p>	<p>TS (E, C)</p>	

	<p>The teacher gave several sentences with a long subject and asked students to consider these sentences. Students pointed out that the subjects were too long and then the teacher introduced the formal subject 'it'. She asked students to revise the examples and explain what the function of 'it' is.</p>			
--	---	--	--	--

7	<p>Exercise 4: Work with Partners</p> <p>After revising the examples, students were required to do more exercise to master the subject clause with 'it'.</p> <p>Students can discuss with their group members. (The teacher walked around the classroom.) Two volunteers were invited to put several pieces of sentence fragments into the right order on the blackboard. All the students were asked to check the sentences with each other in the group. Finally, the teacher let the students read again the right examples on the screen.</p>	CA	SS (E, C) TS (E)	
	She highlighted the key points of this exercise again.			

<p>8</p>	<p>Activity 5: Sentence Correction</p> <p>The teacher assigned the correction exercise about the grammar rules of the subject clause and students should find out the mistakes of each sentence. After the exercise, the teacher summarized all the grammar rules and students read aloud the grammar rules together.</p>	<p>LE</p>	<p>TS (E, C)</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Exercise 6: Writing a paragraph with the subject clause.</p> <p>The teacher showed a paragraph example on the PowerPoint and asked the students read aloud it. At the beginning of the lesson, she introduced a famous agriculturist, Yuan longpin (Pro. Yuan), and the writing task was to write a paragraph about Pro. Yuan.</p>	<p>TBA</p>		

	<p>Before writing, the teacher designed a vocabulary exercise for students' brainstorm. Students tried to use the words they have learnt to describe the good quality of Pro. Yuan. The teacher wrote down these words and asked everyone to read aloud.</p> <p>Subsequently, the teachers provided some sentences patterns and asked students to imitate writing subject clauses and then organize these sentences as a paragraph in five minutes.</p> <p>The teacher walked around the classroom and took one student's paragraph and showed it on the screen for correction. Others' exercises were checked in group.</p>			
--	--	--	--	--

<p>10</p>	<p>Summary: Grammar rules</p> <p>The teacher reviewed the grammar rules learnt today and assigned homework: writing a paragraph to describe a hero by using the subject clause. The teacher also counted the points of each group and offer a reward to the first three groups.</p>		<p>TT (E)</p>	
------------------	--	--	----------------------	--

Appendix 3: Interview questions

Microsystem	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How many classes are you teaching now?2. What grade do you teach?3. What are the students' English levels?4. Tell me about a typical day you work in the school.5. How do you engage in your teaching program?6. How do students respond to the class?7. How do you get along with students?8. How do you deal with the situation when you have some conflicts with your students?9. How do you regulate your emotions when you are influenced by your students?10. How do you approach when you want to correct one of your students' mistakes?11. What do you do if you have a disagreement with a student of yours on an issue?12. How do you relate to the difficulties your students face by?13. What kind of classroom activities do you take in language learning?14. What strategies do you adopt to encourage your students' interest in learning?15. What roles do you think you play in a class?16. How do you express your emotions in a language class?17. How do you feel when your students express negative
-------------	--

	<p>emotions in language learning?</p> <p>18. How do you feel when you teach your first class?</p> <p>19. How do you feel when your students experience difficulties in English learning?</p> <p>20. How do you deal with students' emotions during English learning?</p> <p>26. What do you do to mediate your students' feelings?</p> <p>27. How do you feel when your students succeed or fail in the exam?</p>
Mesosystem	<p>1. How do you get along with colleagues or administrators at school?</p> <p>2. How do you think about the comments or suggestions from your colleagues or administrators?</p>
Exosystem	<p>1. How do you communicate with students' parents?</p> <p>2. How do you think of your current workplace?</p> <p>3. What support does your school provide to you with your teaching?</p>
Macrosystem	<p>1. How do you think of the curriculum and materials of your subject?</p> <p>2. What is the influence of the educational policy on your teaching?</p> <p>3. How do you think of the role of traditional culture in English language teaching? Is there any influence on your teaching and how?</p>

Chronosystem	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How long have you been teaching in this school?2. What are the changes of your teaching from the
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">beginning until now?3. Can you talk about some impressive incidents during the years of your teaching?4. How do you feel about your current job?5. Where do you see yourself going in the future?

Appendix 4: Transcript Extract Individual Interview

<p>Researcher</p>	<p>R: How do you feel when you had your first class?</p>
<p>Mr. Chen</p>	<p>Er, I felt very nervous probably because that was the first time I was faced with many students. Before the class, I did not know how the students would response to the class, and even I did not know whether the teaching content would meet their English level. Our school divided the class randomly, so their levels of English were uneven. Actually, at the beginning of my career, I did not have a deep understanding of this. I was also worried about how much students could learn from what I taught. About the teaching, I often felt confusing or fell into self-doubt. This is because I was just a green hand, and I was not sure whether I could be competent for this job.</p> <p>I was very concerned about students' opinions and comments on me, such as whether they like me or how they think of my teaching. After I got some achievements, I became confident in my teaching. When I received affirmation and encouragement from parents and administrators, I began to trust my ability of teaching and change my attitude. In a word, the first year of teaching plays an essential role in my career life.</p>
<p>Researcher</p>	<p>Could I ask, how do you feel after you endure this period?</p>

<p>Mr. Chen</p>	<p>I felt delighted about their success no matter they achieve with my help or others' help. I hope they can learn English with happiness and really gain useful knowledge. At the same time, I have a sense of success because of my teaching.</p>
<p>Researcher</p>	<p>But, if your students fail in the exam, how do you feel about this?</p>
<p>Mr. Chen</p>	<p>About the failure in examination, I think we need to treat this situation for a long term. It is normal for students' grades to fluctuate. Failure is not a bad thing for the students in Grade1 and Grade 2, because they have enough time to find out what is missing. Those who are in Grade 3 should be place emphasis on the changes of their grades. If there is a sharp fluctuation on the scores, I will make an examination paper analysis to find out the reasons.</p>
<p>Researcher</p>	<p>Can you say something about how you help students overcome difficulties?</p>

Mr. Chen	<p>Er...firstly, I will analyze what kind of difficulties they encountered. For example, some students are inherently weak in memorizing vocabulary. Because of this, I will give them some specific suggestions or strategies on how to remember words. I often told them that there is no need to use all the vocabulary related to the examination. What you can do is to know their meaning. By doing so, it can reduce the degree of difficulty in vocabulary learning. For those who dislike or collide with English learning, I will firstly find the reasons, comfort them, and raise their interest. Besides, I will highlight the importance of English learning because it is associated with your college entrance. In a long term, if you will do research in the future, English is a requisite skill as you need to read references in your professional field.</p>
-----------------	--

Appendix 5: Transcript Extract Focus Groups

<p>Researcher</p>	<p>How do you think of the role of your family in your career life?’</p>
<p>Ms. Wang</p>	<p>I travel to the new campus for one and a half hours, and I finished my work at 6.00 pm on weekdays. The primary school often finishes around 4.00 pm or even early, so I am unable to pick up my kids on time. Thanks to my parents, they replace me to do this so that I do not have to worry about my kids being stranded at school. I even do not need to hurry from work to home. During the holiday, I devote most of my time to my family, such as organizing family trips and accompanying my kids to participate some interest-oriented classes.</p>
<p>Ms. Xiong</p>	<p>Yeah, my family gives me a lot of support in my career. I am a head teacher of a class and must attend morning self-study. I leave home very early and have no time to prepare breakfast for my children. Sometimes, I also need to be on duty at school until night. Most housework is taken by my husband. He spent more time on accompanying our children. I feel very grateful for his devotion to our family. I look after of the child on weekends so that he can rest and relax because he also has a heavy workload.</p>

<p>Ms. Zhai</p>	<p>But I think it is important to separate my work life from family. I never bring my emotions to my family although I encountered something unhappy at school. Everyone will suffer difficulties and stress in the workplace. If we all take them home, the family atmosphere can become</p>
	<p>very depressing. Home is supposed to be a place where people relax. All the members in my family have reached a consensus that we should not allow work to influence our life.</p>
<p>Ms. Xiong</p>	<p>Er, I think there is no conflict between work life and career life. I think work and family like my left hand and right hand, and they do not conflict. Both exist at the same time, and they will not be mutually influenced. For example, I can better settle down everyday affairs in the family or the workplace and reduce the impact. My kid is very young, and I should keep optimistic when staying with him, which is beneficial to his growth. My husband and I are both on the upswing in our careers. We both understand each other's intensity, difficulty, and needs. So, we hope to reduce our pressure and burden in family life through our efforts.</p>

References

- Adler, R. H. (2022). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 38(4), 598-602.
- Aesthetics, 1873-1893. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 35(4), 417-420.
- Allen, H. W. (2003). A mixed-methodology investigation of the linguistic and affective outcomes of summer study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, 36(3), 370-385.
- Alligood, M. R. (1992). Empathy: the importance of recognizing two types.
- Andrews, S. (1994). The Grammatical Awareness and Knowledge of Hong Kong Teachers of English.
- Arasaratnam, L. A. (2006). Further testing of a new model of intercultural communication competence. *Communication Research Reports*, 23(2), 93-99.
- Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, 7(3), 322-343.
- Bacova, D., & Turner, A. (2023). Teacher vulnerability in teacher identity in times of unexpected social change. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 28(3), 349-372.
- Bailey, P., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Daley, C. E. (2003). Foreign language anxiety and student attrition. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 7(3), 304-308.
- Baird, S., & Jenkins, S. R. (2003). Vicarious traumatization, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout in sexual assault and domestic violence agency staff.
- Banks, T. (2014). Creating positive learning environments: antecedent strategies for managing the classroom environment & student behavior. *Creat. Educ.* 05, 519–524. doi: 10.4236/ce.2014.57061
- Barcelos, A. M. F., & Kalaja, P. (2011). Introduction to beliefs about SLA revisited. *System*, 39(3), 281-289.

- Barkhuizen, G. P. (1995). Dialogue Journals in Teacher Education Revisited. *College ESL*, 5(1), 22-35.
- Barkhuizen, G., & Wette, R. (2008). Narrative frames for investigating the experiences of language teachers. *System*, 36(3), 372-387. doi:
- Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., & Chik, A. (2014). *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research*. Routledge.
- Bar-On, R. (1997). *The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i): Technical manual*. Toronto, Canada: Multi-Health Systems.
- Barr, J. J. (2011). The relationship between teachers' empathy and perceptions of school culture. *Educational Studies*, 37(3), 365-369.
- Barrett-Lennard, G. T. (1962). Dimensions of therapist response as causal factors in therapeutic change. *Psychological monographs: General and applied*, 76(43), 1.
- Basch, M. F. (1983). Empathic understanding: A review of the concept and some theoretical considerations. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 31(1), 101-126.
- Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Batson, C. D. (2009). These things called empathy: Eight related but distinct phenomena. In J. Decety & W. J. Ickes (Eds.), *Social neuroscience series: The social neuroscience of empathy* (pp. 3–16). MIT Press.
- Batson, C. D., Ahmad, N., & Stocks, E. L. (2004). Benefits and liabilities of empathy-induced altruism. *The social psychology of good and evil*, 359-385.
- Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education.
- Beijaard, D. (1995). Teachers' prior experiences and actual perceptions of professional identity. *Teachers and teaching*, 1(2), 281-294.

Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and teacher education*, 20(2), 107-128.

Beijaard, D., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. D. (2000). Teachers' perceptions of professional identity: An exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective. *Teaching and teacher education*, 16(7), 749-764.

Belacchi, C., & Farina, E. (2012). Feeling and thinking of others: Affective and cognitive empathy and emotion comprehension in prosocial/hostile preschoolers. *Aggressive behavior*, 38(2), 150-165.

Bell, D. J. (2010). *Why do we stay? Career rural teachers' burnout compared to personal motivational sources and demographics*. The University of NebraskaLincoln.

Benesch, S. (2016). Critical approaches to the study of emotions in English language teaching and learning. *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*, 1-6.

Benmayor, R., & Skotnes, R. (1994). Some reflections on migration and identify.

Benson, P. (2001). *Autonomy in language learning*. Harlow: Longman.

Benson, P. (2014). Narrative inquiry in applied linguistics research. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 34, 154-170.

Bi, B.K. (2009) The principle of 'Zhong and Shu' in *the Analects*. *Journal of Tsinghua University (Philosophy and Social Science)*, (6), 156-157.

Bill, S. (2012). Acceptance, Empathy, and Genuineness: Not A Weakness. <https://www.gordontraining.com/leadership/acceptance-empathy-andgenuineness-not-a-weakness/>

Bolívar, A., & Domingo, J. (2006). The professional identity of secondary school teachers in Spain: Crisis and reconstruction. *Theory and Research in Education*, 4(3), 339-355.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language teaching*, 36(2), 81-109.

Borges, L., & Castro, E. (2022). Autonomy, empathy and transformation in language teacher education: A qualitative study. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 13(2), 286–304.

Boske, C., Osanloo, A., & Newcomb, W. S. (2017). Exploring empathy to promote social justice leadership in schools. *Journal of School Leadership*, 27(3), 361391.

Bostic, T. B. (2006). *Teacher empathy and its relationship to the standardized test scores of diverse secondary students*. Virginia Commonwealth University.

Boston: McGraw Hill.

Bouffard-Bouchard, T., Parent, S., & Larivee, S. (1991). Influence of self-efficacy on self-regulation and performance among junior and senior high-school age students. *International journal of behavioral development*, 14(2), 153-164.

Brackett, M. A., & Katulak, N. A. (2006). Emotional intelligence in the classroom: Skill-based training for teachers and students. *Applying emotional intelligence: A practitioner's guide*, 1-2.

Braine, G. (2012). Non-native-speaker English teachers. *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*, 1-5.

Bray, M. (2013). Benefits and tensions of shadow education: Comparative perspectives on the roles and impact of private supplementary tutoring in the lives of Hong Kong students. *Journal of International and Comparative Education (JICE)*, 18-30.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard university press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2007). The bioecological model of human development. *Handbook of child psychology, 1*.

Brown, A. L., & Palincsar, A. S. (1989). Guided, cooperative learning and individual knowledge acquisition. *Knowing, learning, and instruction: Essays in honor of Robert Glaser*, 393-451.

Brown, J. D., & Marshall, M. A. (2006). The three faces of self-esteem. *Selfesteem: Issues and answers*, 4-9.

Brunner, J. J. (1998). Globalización cultural y posmodernidad.

Bubandt, N., & Willerslev, R. (2015). The dark side of empathy: Mimesis, deception, and the magic of alterity. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 57(1), 5-34.

Bukor, E. (2015). Exploring teacher identity from a holistic perspective: Reconstructing and reconnecting personal and professional selves. *Teachers and teaching*, 21(3), 305-327.

Burke, J. (2004). *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence*. Penn State Press.

Burke, P. J., & Stets, J. E. (2009). *Identity theory*. Oxford University Press.

Busher, H. (2006). *Understanding Educational Leadership: People, Power And Culture: People, Power and Culture*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Butler, E. A. (2011). Temporal Interpersonal Emotion Systems: The “TIES” that form relationships. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(4), 367–393.

Bygate, M. (2012). Narrative frames commentary. In R. Barnard & A. Burns (Eds.),

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Multilingual Matters.

- Caldwell, B. (2015). *Beyond positivism*. Routledge.
- Cambridge journal of education*, 39(2), 175-189.
- Cambridge university press.
- Cameron C.D., Hutcherson C.A., Ferguson A.M., Scheffer J.A., Hadjiandreou E., Inzlicht M. Empathy is hard work: People choose to avoid empathy because of its cognitive costs. *J. Exp. Psychol. Gen.* 2019;148:962–976.
- Cameron, L., & Seu, I. B. (2012). Landscapes of empathy: Spatial scenarios, metaphors and metonymies in responses to distant suffering. *Text & Talk*, 32(3), 281–305.
- Campbell, E. (2003). *EBOOK: The Ethical Teacher*. McGraw-hill education (UK).
- Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, 35(3), 64-84.
- Cao, T.S. & Lu, N.G (2005). Teacher identity in school reform. *Journal of East China Normal University (Educational Sciences)*: (3).
- Castle, P., & Buckler, S. (2009). *How to be a successful teacher: Strategies for personal and professional development*. Sage.
- Çelikkaleli, Ö., & Ökmen, A. S. (2021). The Role of Empathic Tendency, Belief in
- Chan, D. W. (2006). Emotional intelligence and components of burnout among Chinese secondary school teachers in Hong Kong. *Teaching and teacher education*, 22(8), 1042-1054.
- Chandler, D. E., Kram, K. E., & Yip, J. (2011). An ecological systems perspective on mentoring at work: A review and prospects. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 5(1), 519-570.
- Chang, M. L. (2009). An appraisal perspective of teacher burnout: Examining the emotional work of teachers. *Educational psychology review*, 21, 193-218.

- Chee, Y. S., Mehrotra, S., & Ong, J. C. (2015). Professional development for scaling pedagogical innovation in the context of game-based learning: Teacher identity as cornerstone in “shifting” practice. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(5), 423-437.
- Chen J. (2019). Teacher emotions in their professional lives: implications for teacher development. *Asia Pac. J. Teach. Educ.* 48 491–507
- Chen, J. (2016). Understanding teacher emotions: The development of a teacher emotion inventory. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 55, 68-77.
- Chen, L. (2008). The effect of empathy on college English speaking. *Asian Social Science*, 4(8), 142-146.
- Chen, Q. (2022). Confucianism and the shaping of modern social order in China. In *Chinese culture and its impact on China's development* (pp. 157-188).
- Chen, Q., Hao, C., & Xiao, Y. (2020). When testing stakes are no longer high: impact on the Chinese College English learners and their learning. *Language Testing in Asia*, 10(1), 6.
- Chen, X.M. (2011). *Building a bridge between practice and theory—a research on teachers' practical knowledge*. Beijing: Educational Science Press.
- Cheng, L. (2021). The Implications of EFL/ESL Teachers' Emotions in Their Professional Identity Development. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12.
- Chinese College English Teachers to Scientific Research. *Chinese Applied Linguistics*, (3), 273-291.
- Ciarrochi, J., Chan, A., & Caputi, P. (2000). A critical evaluation of the emotional intelligence construct. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 28(3), 539-561.
- Clandinin DJ, Rosiek J (2007) Mapping a landscape of narrative inquiry: borderland spaces and tensions. In: Clandinin DJ (ed), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: mapping a methodology*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, pp 35–75

Clandinin, D. J. (1985). Personal practical knowledge: A study of teachers' classroom images. *Curriculum inquiry*, 15(4), 361-385.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2004). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. John Wiley & Sons.

Clandinin, D. J., Connelly, F. M., & Bradley, J. G. (1999). Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice. *McGill Journal of Education*, 34(2), 189.

Clandinin, D. J., Pushor, D., & Orr, A. M. (2007). Navigating sites for narrative inquiry. *Journal of teacher education*, 58(1), 21-35.

Clandinin, D.J., 1992. Narrative and story in teacher education. In: Russell, T. and Munby, H. Editors, 1992. *Teachers and teaching: From classroom to reflection* Falmer, London, United Kingdom.

Claravall, E. B., & Evans-Amalu, K. (2020). Self-Regulation, Empathy, and Compassion: A Critical Triad to Develop Anti-Racist Digital Citizenship in the Time of Pandemic. *Journal of international social studies*, 10(2), 44-59.

Classroom.<https://www.graduateprogram.org/2021/01/how-to-teach-empathyin-the-classroom/>

Coffman, S. L. (1981). Empathy as a relevant instructor variable in the experiential classroom. *Group & Organization Studies*, 6(1), 114-120.

Cognitive Dissonance in High Stakes Test-Influenced Environments. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 26(1), 35-51.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education* (5th ed.). London: Routledge/Falmer.

Cohen, N. W. (2008). *What the Rabbis said: The public discourse of 19th century American Rabbis*. NYU Press. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 137-148.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1995). Narrative and education. *Teachers and teaching*, 1(1), 73-85.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (3rd ed., pp. 477–487). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Contextual influences on behavioral synchrony. *Eur. J. Soc. Psychol.*

Cooper, B. (2011). *Empathy in education: Engagement, values, and achievement*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Cooper, K., & Olson, M. R. (2020). The multiple ‘I’s’ of teacher identity.

Corcoran, K. (1981). *Experiential Empathy: a Theory of a Felt-Level Experience*.

Costello, C. Y. (2005). *Professional identity crisis: Race, class, gender, and success at professional schools*. Vanderbilt University Press.

Course Interruptions. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 02734753211073891.

Cowie, N. (2011). Emotions that experienced English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers feel about their students, their colleagues, and their work. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 235-242.

Craig, C. J. (2011). *Narrative inquiry in teaching and teacher education*. In *Narrative inquiries into curriculum making in teacher education*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Craig, P. E. (1978). *The heart of the teacher: A heuristic study of the inner world of teaching*. Boston University school of education.

Craig, W. M., Pepler, D., & Atlas, R. (2000). Observations of bullying in the playground and in the classroom. *School psychology international*, 21(1), 22-36.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Croker, R. A. (2009). An introduction to qualitative research. In *Qualitative research in applied linguistics* (pp. 3-24). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Cross, D. I., & Hong, J. Y. (2012). An ecological examination of teachers' emotions in the school context. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*(7), 957-967.

Crotty, M. J. (1998). The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process. *The foundations of social research*, 1-256.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Seligman, M. (2000). Positive psychology. *American psychologist, 55*(1), 5-14. curriculum: A narrative experience, Bogotá, Colombia, 13(1), 89-110.

D. (2017). Burnout in special needs teachers at kindergarten and primary school: Investigating the role of personal resources and work wellbeing. *Psychology in the Schools, 54*(5), 472-486.

Dai, X.D (2011). *Intercultural Communication Theory*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Davies M, Stankov L, Roberts RD (1998). Emotional intelligence: In search of an elusive construct. *Journal of Personality and Social*.

Davis, M. H. (1983). Measuring individual differences in empathy: Evidence for a multidimensional approach. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 44*(1), 113.

Day, C. (2004). School reform and transitions in teacher professionalism and identity. *International journal of educational research, 37*(8), 677-692.

Day, C., & Harris, B. (2016). Understanding and planning emotions research. *Methodological Advances in Research on Emotion and Education, 55-*

Day, C., & Lee, J. (2011). New understandings of teacher's work. *Emotions and Educational*.

Day, C., Kington, A., Stobart, G., & Sammons, P. (2006). The personal and professional selves of teachers: Stable and unstable identities. *British educational research journal*, 32(4), 601-616.

de Dios Martínez Agudo, J. (Ed.). (2018). *Emotions in second language teaching*.

de Matos Duarte, J. F. (2016). *Mindfulness and Compassion: An Exploration of Related Concepts and Implications for Psychological Well-Being* (Doctoral dissertation, Universidade de Coimbra (Portugal)).

De Stasio, S., Fiorilli, C., Benevene, P., Uusitalo-Malmivaara, L., & Chiacchio, C.

De Vignemont, F., & Singer, T. (2006). The empathic brain: how, when and why?.

De Wied, M., Branje, S. J., & Meeus, W. H. (2007). Empathy and conflict resolution in friendship relations among adolescents. *Aggressive Behavior: Official Journal of the International Society for Research on Aggression*, 33(1), 48-55.

Decety, J., & Lamm, C. (2006). Human empathy through the lens of social neuroscience. *The Scientific World JOURNAL*, 6, 1146-1163.

Decety, J., & Sommerville, J. A. (2003). Shared representations between self and other: a social cognitive neuroscience view. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 7(12), 527-533.

deMarrais, K. (2004). Elegant communications: Sharing qualitative research with communities, colleagues, and critics. *Qualitative inquiry*, 10(2), 281-297.

Development and Emotional Intelligence: Educational Implications (eds. Peter Salovey & David Sluyter).

Dewaele, J. M. (2012). Personality: Personality traits as independent and dependent variables. In *Psychology for language learning* (pp. 42-57). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Dewaele, J. M. (2015). On emotions in foreign language learning and use. *The Language Teacher*, 39(3), 13-15.

Dewaele, J. M., & Dewaele, L. (2017). The dynamic interactions in foreign language classroom anxiety and foreign language enjoyment of pupils aged 12 to

Dewaele, J. M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2014). The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 4(2), 237-274.

Dewaele, J. M., & Pavlenko, A. (2002). Talking about emotions. *LINGUISTLONDON-INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS-*, 41(2), 56-56.

Dewaele, J. M., & Wei, L. (2012). Multilingualism, empathy, and multicompetence. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 9(4), 352-366.

Dewaele, J. M., Magdalena, A. F., & Saito, K. (2019). The effect of perception of teacher characteristics on Spanish EFL learners' anxiety and enjoyment. *The Modern Language Journal*, 103(2), 412-427.

DeWall, C. N., Baumeister, R. F., Gailliot, M. T., & Maner, J. K. (2008). Depletion makes the heart grow less helpful: Helping as a function of self-regulatory energy and genetic relatedness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(12), 1653-1662.

Dohrenwend, A. M. (2018). Defining empathy to better teach, measure, and understand its impact. *Academic Medicine*, 93(12), 1754-1756.

Dohrenwend, A. M. (2018). Defining empathy to better teach, measure, and understand its impact. *Academic Medicine*, 93(12), 1754-1756.

Dorman, J. P. (2003). Relationship between school and classroom environment and teacher burnout: A LISREL analysis. *Social Psychology of Education*, 6(2), 107-127.

Dörnyei, Z. & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Harlow:

Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language teaching*, 31(3), 117-135.

Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. New Jersey: Mahwah.

Dörnyei, Z. (2014). Researching complex dynamic systems: 'Retrodictive qualitative modelling' in the language classroom. *Language Teaching*, 47(1), 80-

Dörnyei, Z., & Murphey, T. (2003). *Group dynamics in the language classroom* (Vol. 10). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dörnyei, Z., & Ryan, S. (2015). *The psychology of the language learner revisited*.

Dou, W.N. (2011). The formation and influencing factors of professional identity construction of new English teachers—From the perspective of school environment. *Modern Education Science*, (8): 15-21.

Duan, C., & Hill, C. E. (1996). The current state of empathy research. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 43(3), 261.

Duff, P. A., & Uchida, Y. (1997). The negotiation of teachers' sociocultural identities and practices in postsecondary EFL classrooms. *Tesol Quarterly*, 31(3), 451-486.

Dunn, J., Brown, J., Slomkowski, C., Tesla, C., & Youngblade, L. (1991). Young children's understanding of other people's feelings and beliefs: Individual differences and their antecedents. *Child development*, 62(6), 1352-1366.

Educational Researcher, 19(5), 2-14.

Educational theory, 53(1).

Edwards, C. P., & Kutaka, T. S. (2015). Diverse perspectives of parents, diverse concepts of parent involvement and participation: What can they suggest to researchers?. *Foundational aspects of family-school partnership research*, 35-

Edwards, E., & Burns, A. (2016). Language teacher-researcher identity negotiation: An ecological perspective. *Tesol Quarterly*, 50(3), 735-745.

Einolf, C. J. (2012). Is cognitive empathy more important than affective empathy? A response to "who helps natural-disaster victims?". *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 12(1), 268-271.

Eisenberg, N., Shea, C. L., Carlo, G., & Knight, G. P. (2014). Empathy-related responding and cognition: A "chicken and the egg" dilemma. In *Handbook of moral behavior and development* (pp. 85-110). Psychology Press.

Elbaz, F. (2018). *Teacher thinking: A study of practical knowledge*. Routledge.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Elmes, D. (2013). The relationship between language and culture.

Emery, E. J. (1987). Empathy: Psychoanalytic and client centered.

Empathic EFL Teacher: A Correlational Analysis of Empathy and Classroom Management Orientations. *Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics-ISSN 23143576*, 10(2), 29-50.

Epstein, J. L., Galindo, C. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2011). Levels of leadership: Effects of district and school leaders on the quality of school programs of family and community involvement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 47(3), 462-495.

Eraut, M. (1994). *Developing professional knowledge and competence*.

Erickson, L. B., & Pinnegar, S. (2017). Consequences of personal teaching metaphors for teacher identity and practice. *Teachers and Teaching*, 23(1), 106-122.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Youth and crisis*. New York, NY: WW Norton & Company.

Esbjörn-Hargens, S., & Zimmerman, M. (2009). An overview of integral ecology. *Resource Paper*, 2, 1-14.

Ezer, H., Gilat, I., & Sagee, R. (2010). Perception of teacher education and professional identity among novice teachers. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(4), 391-404.

Faez, F. (2012). Diverse teachers for diverse students: Internationally educated and Canadian-born teachers' preparedness to teach English language learners.

Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analyzing Discourse: Textual analysis for social research*.

Fang, M.S. (2013). The Structure of Vygotsky's Theory of Emotions and the Approach to Educational Clinics. *Global Education Outlook*, (11), 79-87.

Farrell, T. (2011). Exploring the professional role identities of experienced ESL teachers through reflective practice. *System*, 39, 54-62.

Feng, Y.L. (2012). *A Brief History of Chinese Philosophy*. Beijing: Peking University Press.

Fenstermacher, G. D. (1994). Chapter 1: The knower and the known: The nature of knowledge in research on teaching. *Review of research in education*, 20(1), 3-

Ferguson, L. E., & Lunn, J. (2021). *Teacher beliefs and epistemologies*. Oxford University Press.

Findell, C. R. (2008). What differentiates expert teachers from others?. *Journal of education*, 188(2), 11-23.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York:

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American psychologist*, 56(3), 218.

Freeman, D. (2001). Second language teacher education. *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages*, 72-79.

Frenzel, A., Daniels, L., & Burić, I. (2021). Teacher emotions in the classroom and their implications for students. *Educational Psychologist*, 56, 250 - 264.

Freudenberger, H. J. (1974). Staff burn-out. *Journal of social issues*, 30(1), 159-165.

Futch Ehrlich, V. A., Deutsch, N. L., Fox, C. V., Johnson, H. E., & Varga, S. M.

Gaesser, B. (2013). Constructing memory, imagination, and empathy: a cognitive neuroscience perspective. *Frontiers in psychology*, 3, 576.

Gallese, V., Keysers, C., & Rizzolatti, G. (2004). A unifying view of the basis of social cognition. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 8(9), 396–403.

Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1993). On the measurement of affective variables in second language learning. *Language Learning*, 43(2), 157-194.

Gardner, R. C., MacIntyre, P. D., & Lysynchuk, L. M. (1990). The affective dimension in second language programme evaluation. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 3(1), 39-64.

Ge, C., & Ge, C. (2020). Moral Thoughts and Chinese Traditional Culture. View of Moralization: *Study on Confucian Moral Thought*, 203-252.

Ge, Y., Li, W., Chen, F., Kayani, S., & Qin, G. (2021). The theories of the development of students: A factor to shape teacher empathy from the perspective of motivation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 736656.

Gee, J. (1996) *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*, Second Edition. London, Taylor & Francis.

Gee, J. P. (1999). An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method.

Gee, J. P. (2000). Chapter 3: Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of research in education*, 25(1), 99-125.

Gee, J. P. (2004). Discourse analysis: What makes it critical?. In *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (pp. 49-80). Routledge.

Gibbs, G. (2006). How assessment frames student learning. In *Innovative assessment in higher education* (pp. 43-56). Routledge.

Gibbs, G. R. (2018). *Analyzing qualitative data* (Vol. 6). Sage.

Gilakjani, A. P., & Sabouri, N. B. (2017). Teachers' Beliefs in English Language Teaching and Learning: A Review of the Literature. *English Language Teaching*, 10(4), 78-86.

Gill, L., Schaddelee, M., Ramsey, P. L., Turner, S., & Naylor, T. (2018). When empathy works: Towards finding effective ways of sustaining empathy flow. *APMBA (Asia Pacific Management and Business Application)*, 6(3), 115-136.

Gkonou, C., Dewaele, J. M., & King, J. (Eds.). (2020). *The emotional rollercoaster of language teaching* (Vol. 4). Multilingual Matters.

Gladstein, G. A. (1983). Understanding empathy: Integrating counseling, developmental, and social psychology perspectives. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 30(4), 467.

Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity*. University of California.

Goetz, J. L., Keltner, D., & Simon-Thomas, E. (2010). Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136(3), 351-374. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018807>

Goetz, J. L., Keltner, D., & Simon-Thomas, E. (2010). Compassion: an evolutionary analysis and empirical review. *Psychological bulletin*, 136(3), 351.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.

Golombek, P., & Doran, M. (2014). Unifying cognition, emotion, and activity in language teacher professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 39, 102-111.

Goodnough, K. (2010). The role of action research in transforming teacher identity: Modes of belonging and ecological perspectives. *Educational Action Research*, 18(2), 167-182.

Goodson, I. F., & Cole, A. L. (1994). Exploring the teacher's professional knowledge: Constructing identity and community. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 85-105.

Grandey, A. A., & Gabriel, A. S. (2015). Emotional labor at a crossroads: Where do we go from here?. *Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav.*, 2(1), 323-349.

Grayson, J. L., & Alvarez, H. K. (2008). School climate factors relating to teacher burnout: A mediator model. *Teaching and teacher education*, 24(5), 1349-1363.

Greer, V. A. (2023). A Qualitative Exploration of Perceived Administrative Empathy and Faculties' Job Satisfaction (Doctoral dissertation, University of La Verne).

Gregersen, T., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2014). *Capitalizing on language learners' individuality: From premise to practice*. Multilingual Matters.

Grühn, D., Rebucal, K., Diehl, M., Lumley, M., and Labouvie-Vief, G. (2008). Empathy across the adult lifespan: longitudinal and experience-sampling findings. *Emotion* 8, 753–765. doi: 10.1037/a0014123

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2(163-194), 105.

Guerra, P. L., & Wubbena, Z. C. (2017). *Teacher Beliefs and Classroom Practices*. Guilford.

Guiora, A. Z., Brannon, R. C., & Dull, C. Y. (1972). Empathy and second language learning 1. *Language learning*, 22(1), 111-130.

Guo, Y. (2014). *Education in China: Reforms and Innovations*.

Guo, Y., Chen, Q., Zhai, S., & Pei, C. (2020). Does private tutoring improve student learning in China? Evidence from the China Education Panel Survey.

Hadwin, A., Järvelä, S., & Miller, M. (2017). Self-regulation, co-regulation, and shared regulation in collaborative learning environments. In *Handbook of self-regulation of learning and performance* (pp. 83-106). Routledge.

Hahl, K., & Mikulec, E. (2018). Student reflections on teacher identity development in a year-long secondary teacher preparation program. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, 43(12), 42-58.

Hall, J. A., & Schwartz, R. (2019). Empathy present and future. *The Journal of social psychology*, 159(3), 225-243.

Hall, J., Schwartz, R., & Duong, F. (2020). How do laypeople define empathy? *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 161, 5 - 24.

Handbook of distance education, 79-86.

Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Van Hoa Thong Tin.

Harbers, M., Van den Bosch, K., & Meyer, J. J. (2012). Modeling agents with a theory of mind: Theory–theory versus simulation theory. *Web Intelligence and Agent Systems: An International Journal*, 10(3), 331-343.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. Teachers College Press.

Hargreaves, A. (1998). The emotional practice of teaching. *Teaching and teacher education*.

Hargreaves, A. (2000). Mixed emotions: Teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16(8), 811-826.

Hargreaves, A. (2001). Emotional geographies of teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 103(6), 1056-1080.

Harvey, V. S., & Macklem, G. L. (2009). Self-regulation. *Evidence-based practice in infant and early childhood psychology*, 309-349.

Hatfield, E., Rapson, R. L., & Le, Y. L. (2009). Primitive emotional contagion: Recent research. In J. Decety & W. Ickes (Eds.), *The social neuroscience of empathy* (pp. 19-30). Boston, MA: MIT Press.

Heigham, J., & Croker, R. A. (2009). Qualitative research in applied linguistics.

Hen, M., & Goroshit, M. (2016). Social–emotional competencies among teachers: An examination of interrelationships. *Cogent Education*, 3.

Herman, L., & Vervaeck, B. (2019). *Handbook of narrative analysis*. U of Nebraska Press.

Hilleson, M. (1996). Reticence and anxiety in second language learning. In K. M. Bailey & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voice from the language classroom* (pp. 248-277). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hitchcock, G., & Hughes, D. (1995). Research and the teacher: A qualitative introduction to school-based research. *London & New York: Routledge*.

Hochschild, A. (1983). *The managed heart*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hoffman, J. W. (2018). *Expressions of Empathy: Narrative Inquiry, Literature, and Classroom Conversations* (Doctoral dissertation, Judson University).

Hoffman, M. L. (1982). Affect and moral development. *New directions for child development*.

Hoffman, M. L. (1984). Interaction of affect and cognition in empathy. *Emotions, cognition, and behavior*, 103-131.

Holly D. Elmore. (2021). How to Teach Empathy in the

Holly, M. L., & Mcloughlin, C. S. (1989). Perspectives on teacher professional development. (No Title).

Holmberg, B. (2003). A theory of distance education based on empathy.

Hong, Y., Cai, J., Lan, R., Wang, K., Lian, R., & Chen, L. (2022). Empathy and teachers' fairness behavior: The mediating role of moral obligation and moderating role of social value orientation. *PLoS one*, 17(6), e0268681.

Hong, Y., Cai, J., Lan, R., Wang, K., Lian, R., & Chen, L. (2022). Empathy and teachers' fairness behavior: The mediating role of moral obligation and moderating role of social value orientation. *PLoS one*, 17(6), e0268681.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education?. *Review of educational research*, 67(1), 3-

Horner, C., Brown, E., Mehta, S., & Scanlon, C. (2020). Feeling and Acting like a

Horwitz, E. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 21, 112-126.

Horwitz, E. K. (1986). Preliminary evidence for the reliability and validity of a foreign language anxiety scale. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20, 559-564.

Horwitz, E. K. (1988). The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students. *Modern Language Journal*, 72(2), 283-294.

Horwitz, E. K. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21, 112-126.

Horwitz, E. K. (2010). Foreign and second language anxiety. *Language teaching*, 43(2), 154-167.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132.

Horwitz, E. K., Tallon, M., & Luo, H. (2010). Foreign language anxiety. In J. Cassady (Ed.) *Anxiety in schools: The causes, consequences, and solutions for academic anxieties* (pp. 95-115). New York: Peter Lang.

Howe, D. (2012). *Empathy: What it is and why it matters*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/teaching-with-empathy-why-its-important>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/components-of-emotional-intelligence2795438>

Huang, Z.C. (1992). Two major waves of American education reform since the 1980s. *Foreign Education Material*, (5).

Humphrey, R. H., Pollack, J. M., & Hawver, T. (2008). Leading with emotional labor. *Journal of managerial psychology*.

Hurworth, A. (1997). "The note, I trowe, makid was in Fraunce": Chaucer's

Hyland, K. (2001). Providing productive feedback. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 55(3), 239-246.

Ilieva, R. (2010). Non-native English-speaking teachers' negotiations of program discourses in their construction of professional identities within a TESOL program. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 66(3), 343-369.

In Benmayor, R. & Skotnes, A. (Eds.). *Migration and identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

In *Changing research and practice* (pp. 78-89). Routledge.

In *Studying teachers' lives* (pp. 111-164). Routledge.

International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 19(4), 496-520.

Interviews with highly anxious students. In E. K. Horwitz & D. J. Young (Eds.), *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp. 101-108).

Investigating the experiential dimension of empathy through introspection.

Ioannidou, F., & Konstantikaki, V. (2008). Empathy and emotional intelligence:

Isenbarger, L., & Zembylas, M. (2006). The Emotional Labour of Caring in Teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22, 120-134.

Izadinia, M. (2013). A review of research on student teachers' professional identity. *British Educational Research Journal*, 39(4), 694-713.

Jack, K., & Levett-Jones, T. (2022). A model of empathic reflection based on the philosophy of Edith Stein: A discussion paper. *Nurse education in practice*, 63, 103389.

Jahoda, G. (2005). Theodor Lipps and the shift from “sympathy” to “empathy”.

Jankowiak-Siuda, K., Rymarczyk, K., & Grabowska, A. (2011). How we empathize with others: a neurobiological perspective. *Medical science monitor: international medical journal of experimental and clinical research*, 17(1), RA18.

Jay, J. K., & Johnson, K. L. (2002). Capturing complexity: A typology of reflective practice for teacher education. *Teaching and teacher education*, 18(1), 73-85.

Jenkins, J. 1996. Interviews and Interviewing: A case study in geography and public policy. *Australian Geographical Studies* 34 (2): 261–6.

Jennings, P. A., & Min, H. H. (2023). Transforming empathy-based stress to compassion: Skillful means to preventing teacher burnout. *Mindfulness*, 14(10), 2311-2322.

Jia, K., Kang, R., Wang, Y., Ma, L., & Liu, X. (2025). Constructing an empathy education system: Values, principles, and approaches. *Journal of Moral Education*, 1-29.

Jiang J, Vauras M, Volet S, Salo AE. Teacher beliefs and emotion expression in light of support for student psychological needs: A qualitative study. *Education Sciences*. 2019 Mar 28;9(2):68.

Jiang, D.P. (2011). The psychological research of the principle of ‘Zhong and Shu’. *Master Thesis*. Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University.

Jiang, W. (2000). The relationship between culture and language. *ELT journal*, 54(4), 328-334.

Jing, H.B. (2005). The principle of 'Zhong and Shu' and 'Empathy'--- the process and features of two interpersonal cognitive methods. *Confucius Study*, (5), 38-
Jiuzhou Press.

John Benjamins Publishing.

Johnstone (Eds.), *Appraisal processes in emotion* (pp. 221–232). New York, NY: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome St, San Francisco, CA 94104.

Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 21, 29 - 38.

Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services, 30(3), 14–17.

Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, 41(2), 151-163.

Kanfer, R. (1990). Motivation theory and industrial and organizational psychology. *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*, 1(2), 75-130.

Kaya, B. (2016). An evaluation of the empathy levels of pre-service social studies teachers. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 11(6), 229–237.
<https://doi.org/10.5897/ERR2015.2545>

Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Who I am in how I teach is the message: selfunderstanding, vulnerability and reflection. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 15(2), 257-272.

Keller, M. M., Chang, M. L., Becker, E. S., Goetz, T., & Frenzel, A. C. (2014). Teachers' emotional experiences and exhaustion as predictors of emotional labor in the classroom: An experience sampling study. *Frontiers in psychology*, 5, 1442.

Kemper, T. D. (2000). Social models in the explanation of emotions. In M. Lewis & J. Haviland-Jones (Eds.), *Handbook of Emotions* (pp. 45-58). New York:

- Kendra, Cherry. (2023) 5 Key Emotional Intelligence Skills.
- Kerem, E., Fishman, N., & Josselson, R. (2001). The experience of empathy in everyday relationships: Cognitive and affective elements. *Journal of social and personal relationships*, 18(5), 709-729.
- Keysers, C., & Gazzola, V. (2009). Expanding the mirror: vicarious activity for actions, emotions, and sensations. *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, 19(6), 666–671.
- Kianinezhad, N. (2023). The significance of teacher empathy in fostering students' engagement in English language classes. *Journal of Research in Curriculum Instruction and Educational Technology*, 9(2), 77-106.
- Kiely, R., & Davis, M. (2010). From transmission to transformation: Teacher learning in English for speakers of other languages. *Language teaching research*, 14(3), 277-295.
- Knowles, J. G. (2013). MODELS FOR UNDERSTANDING PRE-SERVICE AND BEGINNING TEACHERS' BIOGRAPHIES: ILLUSTRATIONS FROM CASE STUDIES.
- Koc, M. (2011). Let's make a movie: Investigating pre-service teachers' reflections on using video-recorded role-playing cases in Turkey. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 95-106.
- Koch, A. S., & Terrell, T. D. (1991). Affective reactions of foreign language students to Natural Approach activities and teaching techniques. In E. K. Horwitz, & D. J. Young (Eds.), *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp. 109-126). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kock, N., Mayfield, M., Mayfield, J., Sexton, S., & De La Garza, L. M. (2019). Empathetic leadership: How leader emotional support and understanding influences follower performance. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 26(2), 217-236.

Kong, P. A., Yu, X., & Zhao, X. (2017). Private tutoring. In *Handbook of education in China* (pp. 333-354). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Kramsch, C. (2013). Culture in foreign language teaching. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 1(1), 57-78.

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. NY:

Krashen, S. D. (1981). *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Prentice-Hall.

Kuah, K. E. (1990). Confucian ideology and social engineering in Singapore.

Journal of Contemporary Asia, 20(3), 371-383.

Kubanyiova, M., & Feryok, A. (2015). Language teacher cognition in applied linguistics research: Revisiting the territory, redrawing the boundaries, reclaiming the relevance. *The Modern Language Journal*, 99(3), 435-449.

Kunyk, D., & Olson, J. K. (2001). Clarification of conceptualizations of empathy.

Journal of Advanced Nursing, 35(3), 317–325.

Kyriacou, C. (2001). Teacher stress: Directions for future research. *Educational*

review, 53(1), 27-35.

Kyriacou, C., & SUTCLIFFE, J. (1978). Teacher stress: Prevalence, sources, and

symptoms. *British journal of educational psychology*, 48(2), 159-167.

Lagou, K. (2018). *Teacher empathy and implementation of multicultural practices in the classroom* (master's thesis).

Lammers, W. J., Gillaspay, J. A., Jr., & Hancock, F. (2017). Predicting academic success with early, middle, and late semester assessment of student–instructor rapport. *Teaching of Psychology*, 44(2), 145–149.

Larsen-Freeman, D., & Cameron, L. (2008). *Complex systems and applied linguistics* (p. 287p). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Lasky, S. (2005). A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform.
- Lasota, A., Tomaszek, K., & Bosacki, S. (2020). How to become more grateful?
- Lauermann, F. (2014). Teacher responsibility from the teacher's perspective. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 65, 75-89.
- Lawlor, M. S. (2016). Mindfulness and social emotional learning (SEL): A conceptual framework. Handbook of mindfulness in education: *Integrating theory and research into practice*, 65-80.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1991). *Emotion and adaptation*. Oxford University Press.
- Learning to be a teacher. In P. Denicolo., & M. Kompf (Eds.), *Connecting policy*
- Lee, E. L. I. S., & Lew, L. O. R. E. N. (2001). Diary studies: The voices of nonnative English speakers in a Master of Arts program in teaching English to speakers of other languages. *CATESOL Journal*, 13(1), 135-149.
- Lee, I. (2008). Student reactions to teacher feedback in two Hong Kong secondary classrooms. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 17(3), 144-164.
- Lee, J. F. (1999). Clashes in L2 reading: Research versus practice and readers' misconceptions. In D. J. Young (Ed.), *Affect in foreign language learning: A practical guide to creating a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere* (pp. 49-63).
- Lee, J. J., Hardin, A. E., Parmar, B., & Gino, F. (2019). The interpersonal costs of dishonesty: How dishonest behavior reduces individuals' ability to read others' emotions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.
- Leki, I. (1999). Techniques for reducing second language writing anxiety. In D. J. Young (Ed.), *Affect in foreign language learning: A practical guide to creating a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere* (pp. 64-88). Boston: McGraw Hill.

Lennon, R., Eisenberg, N., & Carroll, J. (1986). The relation between nonverbal indices of empathy and preschoolers' prosocial behavior. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 7(3), 219–224.

Lester, J. (Ed.). (2013). *Workplace bullying in higher education*. Routledge.

Leveraging relational assets for adolescent development: A qualitative investigation of youth–adult “connection” in positive youth development. *Qualitative Psychology*, 3(1), 59.

Li, J. (2016). The Chinese Model of Education: Lessons from the Largest Education System in the World.

Li, J., Zhu, L., Gummerum, M., & Sun, Y. (2013). The development of social value orientation across different contexts. *International Journal of Psychology*, 48(4), 469-480.

Li, M. S. (2009). Exploring teacher identity in narratives. *Modern Education Management*, (7): 61-71.

Li, Y. Z (2016). Psychological mechanisms of emotional exhaustion in preschool teachers from the perspective of work-family conflict: the role of emotional intelligence. *Psychological Behaviour Research*, 14 (4): 492-500.

Liao, Y. (1999). The effects of anxiety on Taiwanese EFL learners. *The Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium on English Teaching*, 11-13, 453-463.

Light, L. (2020). On being a teacher: Identity and vulnerability. *Idiom*, 56(2), 35-44.

Lim, M. Y., Leichtenstern, K., Kriegel, M., Enz, S., Aylett, R., Vannini, N., ... & Rizzo, P. (2011). Technology-enhanced role-play for social and emotional learning context–Intercultural empathy. *Entertainment Computing*, 2(4), 223-231.

Liu Y. (2012). A review of the research on the professional identity of foreign language teachers from the perspective of narrative. *Foreign language and Foreign Language Teaching*, (1): (11-15).

- Liu, C., & Dunne, M. (2009). *Education, Change and Inequality in China*.
- Liu, M., & Huang, W. (2011). An exploration of foreign language anxiety and English learning motivation. *Educational Research International*.
- Liu, Y. & Borg. (2014). *An Exploration on the Understanding and Attitudes of*
London: Routledge.
- Longman.
- Lopes, A., Boyd, P., Andrew, N., & Pereira, F. (2014). The research-teaching nexus in nurse and teacher education: Contributions of an ecological approach to academic identities in professional fields. *Higher Education*, 68(2), 167-183.
- Lubicz-Nawrocka, T. (2019). Creativity and collaboration: An exploration of empathy, inclusion, and resilience in co-creation of the curriculum. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 2(3), 199-213.
- Lumma, A., Hackert, B., & Weger, U. (2020). Insights from the inside of empathy:
- Luo, H. (2012). Sources of foreign language anxiety: Towards a four-dimension model. *Contemporary Foreign Language Studies*, 12, 49-61.
- Lussiez, Y. W. (2009). *The empathic principal: The relationship between empathy, transformational leadership, and teacher self-efficacy*. The University of New Mexico.
- Ma, X., Deng, T., Luo, D., & Ma, J. (2021). Analysis of the Relationship between Burnout and Empathy Ability among Teachers in Special Education Schools. In *SHS Web of Conferences* (Vol. 123, p. 01002). EDP Sciences.
- MacIntyre, P. D. (1995). How does anxiety affect second language learning? A reply to Sparks and Ganschow. *The Modern Language Journal*, 79(1), 90-99.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1989). Anxiety and second-language learning:

- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Language anxiety: Its relationship to other anxieties and to processing in native and second languages. *Language Learning*, 41(4), 513–534.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Mercer, S. (2014). Introducing positive psychology to SLA. *Studies in second language learning and teaching*, 4(2), 153-172.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2016). *Positive psychology in second language acquisition*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- MacIntyre, P., & Gregersen, T. (2012). Affect: The role of language anxiety and other emotions in language learning. In *Psychology for language learning: Insights from research, theory and practice* (pp. 103-118). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Mackie, D. M., Smith, E. R., & Ray, D. G. (2008). Intergroup emotions and intergroup relations. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2(5), 1866– 1880.
- Main, A., Walle, E. A., Kho, C., & Halpern, J. (2017). The interpersonal functions of empathy: A relational perspective. *Emotion Review*, 9(4), 358-366.
- Maker, N. (2011). Becoming and 'being' a teacher: Understanding teacher professional identity. In J. Sachs & N. Mockler (Eds.), *Rethinking educational practice through reflexive inquiry: essays in honour of Susan GroundwaterSmith*. New York: Springer.
- Malti, T., Chaparro, M. P., Zuffianò, A., & Colasante, T. (2016). School-based interventions to promote empathy-related responding in children and adolescents: A developmental analysis. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 45(6), 718-731.
- Mangels, J. A., Butterfield, B., Lamb, J., Good, C., & Dweck, C. S. (2006). Why do beliefs about intelligence influence learning success? A social cognitive neuroscience model. *Social cognitive and affective neuroscience*, 1(2), 75-86.

Manstead, A. S. R., & Fischer, A. H. (2001). *Social appraisal: The social world as object of and influence on appraisal processes*. In K. R. Scherer, A. Schorr, & T.

Marsh, D., & Furlong, P. (2002). *A skin, not a sweater: ontology and epistemology in political science*. In D Marsh., & G Stoker, (Eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 17–41.

Martinsone, B., & Žydžiūnaite, V. (2023). Teachers' contributions to the school climate and using empathy at work: Implications from qualitative research in two European countries. *Frontiers in psychology, 14*, 1160546.

Martinsone, B., & Žydžiūnaite, V. (2023). Teachers' contributions to the school climate and using empathy at work: Implications from qualitative research in two European countries. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*, 1160546.

Maslach, C. (1986). Stress, burnout, and workaholism.

Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of organizational behavior, 2*(2), 99-113.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual review of psychology, 52*(1), 397-422.

Matter? An Exploratory Study of Class-Transition Satisfaction in Unplanned

Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality, 9*, 185-211.

Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). "What is Emotional Intelligence?" In *Emotional*

Mazari, A., & Derraz, N. (2015). Language and culture. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2*(2), 350-359.

McAllister, G., & Irvine, J. J. (2002). The role of empathy in teaching culturally diverse students: A qualitative study of teachers' beliefs. *Journal of teacher education, 53*(5), 433-443.

- McConnell-Henry, T., James, A., Chapman, Y., & Francis, K. (2010). Researching with people you know: Issues in interviewing. *Contemporary nurse*, 34(1), 2-9.
- McCulloch, G., Helsby, G., & Knight, P. (2000). *The politics of professionalism: Teachers and the curriculum*. A&C Black.
- McMahan, D. L. (2008). *The making of Buddhist modernism*. Oxford University Press.
- Megan, Orr .(2011). The value of empathy and emotional intelligence at work. <https://risepeople.com/blog/empathy-and-emotional-intelligence-at-work/>
- Mehrabian, A., & Epstein, N. (1972). A measure of emotional empathy. *Journal of personality*.
- Meijer, P. C. (2011). The role of crisis in the development of student teachers' professional identity. In *Navigating in educational contexts* (pp. 41-54). Sense Publishers, Rotterdam.
- Mendieta Aguilar, J. A. (2011). Teachers' knowledge of second language and curriculum: A narrative experience. *Profile Issues in Teachers Professional Development*, 13(1), 89-110.
- Mercer, S. (2020). The wellbeing of language teachers in the private sector: An ecological perspective. *Language Teaching Research*, 1362168820973510.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education. Revised and Expanded from "Case Study Research in Education."*
- Merriweather, L. R., & Morgan, A. J. (2013). Two cultures collide: Bridging the generation gap in a non-traditional mentorship. *Qualitative Report*, 18, 12.
- Meyers, S., Rowell, K., Wells, M., & Smith, B. C. (2019). Teacher empathy: A model of empathy for teaching for student success. *College Teaching*, 67(3), 160-168.

Meyers, S., Rowell, K., Wells, M., & Smith, B. C. (2019). Teacher empathy: A model of empathy for teaching for student success. *College Teaching*, 67(3), 160-168.

Meyers, S., Rowell, K., Wells, M., and Smith, B. C. (2019). Teacher empathy: a model of empathy for teaching for student success. *Coll. Teach.* 67, 160–168. doi: 10.1080/87567555.2019.1579699

Miao, Y.J. (2003). Happiness in the Perspective of Psychology——Research on the Theory and Evaluation of Happiness. *Nanjing Normal University*, 2003.

Michalinos & Paul, A, Schutz (Eds.), *Methodological advances in research on emotion and education* (pp. 55-67). London: Springer.

Miles L.K., Griffiths J.L., Richardson M.J., Macrae C.N. Too late to coordinate:

Miles, M. and Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. London: Sage

Miller, J. (2009). Teacher identity. *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*, 4, 172-181.

Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2017). English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2017 Edition). Beijing: Higher Education Press.

Molaro, M., Perez-Fuentes, M., Linares, J. & Martin, A. (2018). Burnout in health professionals according to their self-esteem, social support, and empathy profile. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 424-431.

Montag, C., Gallinat, J., & Heinz, A. (2008). Theodor Lipps and the concept of empathy: 1851–1914. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 165(10), 1261-1261.

Morgan, B. (2004). Teacher identity as pedagogy: Towards a field-internal conceptualisation in bilingual and second language education. *International journal of bilingual education and bilingualism*, 7(2-3), 172-188.

Morgan, B. (2010). Fostering conceptual roles for change: Identity and agency in ESEA teacher preparation. *Kritika Kultura*, (15).

Morgan, S. R. (1984). An Illustrative Case of High-Empathy Teachers. *Journal of Humanistic Education and Development*, 22(4), 143-48.

Morin A. (2020) Teaching with empathy: Why it's important.

Munoz, L., Ferguson, J. R., Harris, E. G., & Fleming, D. (2022). Does Empathy

Narinasamy, I., & Mamat, W. H. W. (2018). Caring teacher in developing empathy in moral education. *MOJES: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 1(1), 1-19.

Neimeyer & M. J. Mahoney (Eds.), *Constructivism in psychotherapy* (pp. 1–8).

Neimeyer, R. A. (1995). An invitation to constructivist psychotherapies. In R. A.

New York: Springer.

Nguyen, C. D. (2016). Metaphors as a window into identity: A study of teachers of English to young learners in Vietnam. *System*, 60, 66-78.

Nias, J. (1989). Teaching and the self. In M. L. Holly, & C. S. McLoughlin (Eds.).

Nias, J. (1996). Thinking about feeling: The emotions in teaching. *Cambridge journal of education*, 26(3), 293-306.

Nichols, S., & Stich, S. (2002). Reading one's own mind: a cognitive theory of self-awareness. *Aspects of Consciousness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Noddings, N. (1988). An ethic of caring and its implications for instructional arrangements. *American journal of education*, 96(2), 215-230.

Noonan, J. (2018). An Affinity for Learning: Teacher Identity and Powerful Professional Development. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 70, 526 - 537.

Norman, RMG, Malla, AK, Manchanda, R., Harricharan, R., Takhar, J., & Northcott, S.

Norton, B. (1997). Language, identity, and the ownership of English. *TESOL quarterly*, 31(3), 409-429.

O'Connor, K. E. (2008). "You choose to care": Teachers, emotions and professional identity. *Teaching and teacher education*, 24(1), 117-126.

O'Connor, P. (2008, August). User-generated content and travel: A case study on Tripadvisor.com. In *Enter* (Vol. 2008, pp. 47-58).

Oberle, E., Gist, A., Cooray, M. S., & Pinto, J. B. (2020). Do students notice stress in teachers? Associations between classroom teacher burnout and students' perceptions of teacher social-emotional competence. *Psychology in the Schools*, 57(11), 1741-1756.

O'Brian, A. (2022). The Effects of Leading with Empathy on Faculty Morale in a Montessori Setting.

OECD (2016). Education in China: A Snapshot.

OF EMOTIONAL QUOTIENT: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY ON TEACHER. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 7.

Okonofua, J. A., Paunesku, D., & Walton, G. M. (2016). Brief intervention to encourage empathic discipline cuts suspension rates in half among adolescents. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(19), 5221-5226.

Ollerenshaw, J. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2002). Narrative research: A comparison of two restorying data analysis approaches. *Qualitative inquiry*, 8(3), 329-347.

Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 123(2), 90-100.

Ostermeier, K., Anzollitto, P., Cooper, D., & Hancock, J. (2023). When identities collide: organizational and professional identity conflict and employee outcomes. *Management Decision*, 61(9), 2493-2511.

Oxford University Press.

Oxford, R. L. (2016). *2 Toward a Psychology of Well-Being for Language Learners:*

Oxford, R. L. (2016). *Teaching and researching language learning strategies: Selfregulation in context.* Routledge.

Palmer, C. (1998). *Heritage tourism and English national identity* (Doctoral dissertation, University of North London).

Paloniemi, E., Mikkola, I., Vatjus, R., Jokelainen, J., Timonen, M., & Hagnäs, M. (2021). Measures of empathy and the capacity for self-reflection in dental and medical students. *BMC Medical Education, 21*(1), 1-7.

Pantheon Books.

Parkinson, B. (2011). Interpersonal emotion transfer: Contagion and social appraisal. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 5*(7), 428–439.

Parlement of Foulys and Machaut's Dit des Quatre Oiseaux. *Bulletin des Anglicistes Médiévistes/Etudes Médiévales Anglaises, 51*(1), 13-29.

Parsons, S. A., Vaughn, M., Scales, R. Q., Gallagher, M. A., Parsons, A. W., Davis, S. G., Pierczynski, M., & Allen, M. (2018). Teachers' instructional adaptations: A research synthesis. *Review of Educational Research, 88*(2), 205–242.

Patrick, H., Turner, J. C., Meyer, D. K., & Midgley, C. (2003). How teachers establish psychological environments during the first days of school: Associations with avoidance in mathematics. *Teachers College Record, 105*(8), 1521-1558.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Peart, N. A., & Campbell, F. A. (1999). At-Risk Students' Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness. *Journal for a just and caring education, 5*(3), 269-84.

- Peetz, J., Wilson, A. E., & Strahan, E. J. (2009). So far away: The role of subjective temporal distance to future goals in motivation and behavior. *Social Cognition*, 27(4), 475.
- Peirce, B. N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL quarterly*, 29(1), 9-31.
- Pekrun, R., & Linnenbrink-Garcia, L. (2014). Introduction to emotions in education. In *International handbook of emotions in education* (pp. 11-20). Pergamon.
- Perry, R. J., Rosen, H. R., Kramer, J. H., Beer, J. S., Levenson, R. L., & Miller, B. L. Petty, T., Good, A., & Putman, S. M. (Eds.). (2016). Handbook of research on professional development for quality teaching and learning. IGI Global.
- Phan Ngoc (1998) Ban Sac Van Hoa Viet Nam (Vietnamese Cultural Identity).
- Phillips, E. M. (1992). The effects of language anxiety on student oral test performance and attitudes. *The Modern Language Journal*, 76(1), 14-26.
- Philosophical Psychology*, 33, 64 - 85.
- Pigman, G. (1995). Freud and the history of empathy. *The International journal of psychoanalysis*, 76 (Pt 2), 237-56.
- Pillen, M., Beijaard, D., & Brok, P. (2013). Tensions in beginning teachers' professional identity development, accompanying feelings and coping strategies. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 36, 240 - 260.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 8(1), 5-23.
- Poulou, M. S. (2017). The relation of teachers' emotional intelligence and students' social skills to students' emotional and behavioral difficulties: A study of preschool teachers' perceptions. *Early Education and Development*, 28(8), 996-1010.

Powell, P. A., & Roberts, J. (2017). Situational determinants of cognitive, affective, and compassionate empathy in naturalistic digital interactions.

Preckel, K., Kanske, P., & Singer, T. (2018). On the interaction of social affect and cognition: empathy, compassion and theory of mind. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 19, 1-6.

Premack, D., & Woodruff, G. (1978). Does the chimpanzee have a theory of mind?. *Behavioral and brain sciences*, 1(4), 515-526. Press.

Price, M. L. (1991). The subjective experience of foreign language anxiety:

Protassova, E., Mikelsone, I., & Latsone, L. (2021). Teacher's Identity Development Through Reflection. European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences.

Psychology Press.

Qwai, N. (2024). *Empathy in Written Feedback to Graduate Students* (Doctoral dissertation, Université d'Ottawa| University of Ottawa).

Rallis, S. F., & Rossman, G. B. (2009). Ethics and trustworthiness. In *Qualitative research in applied linguistics* (pp. 263-287). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Randall, M. (2007). *Memory, psychology and second language learning* (Vol. 19).

Ratka, A. (2018). Empathy and the development of affective skills. *American Journal of pharmaceutical education*, 82(10).

Raus, R. (2016). Modelling a Learning Journey towards Teacher Ecological Self. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, 18(2), 41-52.

Reeve, J., & Cheon, S. H. (2021). Autonomy-supportive teaching: Its malleability, benefits, and potential to improve educational practice. *Educational psychologist*, 56(1), 54-77.

Reeve, J., & Cheon, S. H. (2021). Autonomy-supportive teaching: Its malleability, benefits, and potential to improve educational practice. *Educational psychologist*, 56(1), 54-77.

Reeve, J., Vansteenkiste, M., Assor, A., Ahmad, I., Cheon, S. H., Jang, H., ... & Wang, C. J. (2014). The beliefs that underlie autonomy-supportive and controlling teaching: A multinational investigation. *Motivation and Emotion*, 38, 93-110.

Regulation and Classroom Management. *Theory Into Practice*, 48, 130 - 137.

Reio Jr, T. G. (2005). Emotions as a lens to explore teacher identity and change: A commentary. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(8), 985-993.

Renn, K. A., & Arnold, K. D. (2003). Reconceptualizing research on college student peer culture. *The journal of higher education*, 74(3), 261-291.

Rescher, N. (2003). *Epistemology: An introduction to the theory of knowledge*. SUNY Press. *Researching language teacher cognition and practice: International case studies* (pp. 58-67). Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.

review of literature and implications for future research. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 30(6), 855-863.

Richards, J. C. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching*.

Richards, J. C. (2010). Competence and performance in language teaching. *RELC journal*, 41(2), 101-122.

Richards, R. M., & Ellis, A. W. (2008). Mechanisms of identity and gender decisions to faces: Who rocked in 1986?. *Perception*, 37(11), 1700-1719.

Richardson, J. C., Arbaugh, J. B., Cleveland-Innes, M., Ice, P., Swan, K. P., & Garrison, D. R. (2012). Using the community of inquiry framework to inform effective instructional design. *The next generation of distance education*:

Rieckhoff, B. S., Ockerman, M., Proweller, A., & Wolfinger, J. (2020). Building teacher empathy and culturally responsive practice through professional development and self-reflection. *Journal of Vincentian Social Action*, 5(2), 8.

Rieckhoff, B. S., Ockerman, M., Proweller, A., & Wolfinger, J. (2020). Building teacher empathy and culturally responsive practice through professional development and self-reflection. *Journal of Vincentian Social Action*, 5(2), 8.

Rieckhoff, B. S., Ockerman, M., Proweller, A., & Wolfinger, J. (2020). Building teacher empathy and culturally responsive practice through professional development and self-reflection. *Journal of Vincentian Social Action*, 5(2), 8.

Riess, H., & Kraft-Todd, G. (2014). EMPATHY: a tool to enhance nonverbal communication between clinicians and their patients. *Academic Medicine*, 89(8), 1108-1112.

Riess, H., & Kraft-Todd, G. (2014). EMPATHY: a tool to enhance nonverbal communication between clinicians and their patients. *Academic Medicine*, 89(8), 1108-1112.

Ringwald, W. R., & Wright*, A. G. (2021). The affiliative role of empathy in everyday interpersonal interactions. *European Journal of Personality*, 35(2), 197211.

Rodgers, C. R., & Scott, K. H. (2008). The development of the personal self and professional identity in learning to teach. In *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 732-755). Routledge.

Rodgers, C. R., & Scott, K. H. (2008). The development of the personal self and professional identity in learning to teach. In *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 732-755). Routledge.

Rogers, I. A. (1986). The effects of undergraduate nursing education on empathy. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 8(3), 329-342.

Rosensteel, L. J. (2020). A Predictive and Causal-Comparative Analysis of
Ross, A. (2005). *Professional identities, inter-professional relationships, and collaborative working: an investigation using a constructivist phenomenological approach* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Huddersfield).

Ross, M. L. (2015). What have we learned about the resource curse?. *Annual review of political science*, 18, 239-259.

Routledge.

Routledge.

Ruben, B. D. (1976). Assessing communication competency for intercultural adaptation. *Group & Organization Studies*, 1(3), 334-354.

Rule, A. C., Montgomery, S. E., & Vander Zanden, S. M. (2014). Preservice teachers map compassion: Connecting social studies and literacy through nonfictional animal stories. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 42(3), 219-230.

Sachs, J. (2005). Teacher education and the development of professional identity:

Salvner, G. M. (2001). Lessons and lives: Why young adult literature matters. *The ALAN Review*, 28(3), 9-1.

Schaufeli, W. B., & Greenglass, E. R. (2001). Introduction to special issue on burnout and health. *Psychology & health*, 16(5), 501-510.

Schneider, L. (2019). Education and Society in China.

Schon, D. A. (2008). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic books.

Schumann, J. H. (1997). The Neurobiology of Affect in Language. A Supplement to. *Language Learning, A Journal of Research in Language Studies*, 48.

Schutz, P. A. (2014). Inquiry on teachers' emotion. *Educational Psychologist*, 49(1), 1-12.

Schutz, P. A., & Lee, M. (2014). Teacher emotion, emotional labor and teacher identity. *Utrecht Studies in Language & Communication*, 27.

Schutz, P. A., Hong, J. Y., Cross, D. I., & Osbon, J. N. (2006). Reflections on investigating emotion in educational activity settings. *Educational psychology review, 18*(4), 343-360.

Schutz, P. A., Hong, J., & Francis, D. C. (Eds.). (2018). *Research on teacher identity: Mapping challenges and innovations*. Springer.

Schwartz, S. J. (2001). The evolution of Eriksonian and, neo-Eriksonian identity theory and research: A review and integration. *Identity: an international journal of theory and research, 1*(1), 7-58.

Scovel, T. (1978). The effect of affect on foreign language learning: A review of the anxiety research. *Language learning, 28*(1), 129-142.

Shamay-Tsoory, S. G. (2011). The neural bases for empathy. *The Neuroscientist, 17*(1), 18-24.

Sharma, E., Mazar, N., Alter, A. L., & Ariely, D. (2014). Financial deprivation selectively shifts moral standards and compromises moral decisions.

Shen, L. (2010). On a scale of state empathy during message processing.

Shghadam, R., & Sahebjam, S. (2012). Personality and emotional intelligence in teacher burnout. *The Spanish journal of psychology, 15*(1), 227-236.

Silver, M. A., Portnoy, S., & Peters, J. K. (2015). Stress, burnout, vicarious trauma, and other emotional realities in the lawyer/client relationship. *Touro Law Review, 19*(4).

Singer, T. (2006). The neuronal basis and ontogeny of empathy and mind reading:

Singer, T., & Klimecki, O. M. (2014). Empathy and compassion. *Current Biology, 24*(18), R875-R878.

Singer, T., & Lamm, C. (2009). The social neuroscience of empathy. *Annals of the new York Academy of Sciences, 1156*(1), 81-96.

- Singh, P., & Dali, C. M. (2013). Need for emotional intelligence to develop principals' social skills. *Africa Education Review*, 10(3), 502-519.
- Slatyer, S., Craigie, M., Rees, C., Davis, S., Dolan, T., & Hegney, D. (2018). Nurse experience of participation in a mindfulness-based self-care and resiliency intervention. *Mindfulness*, 9, 610-617.
- Smith, A. (2006). Cognitive empathy and emotional empathy in human behavior and evolution. *The Psychological Record*, 56(1), 3-21.
- Smith, T. E., Holmes, S. R., Sheridan, S. M., Cooper, J. M., Bloomfield, B. S., & Preast, J. L. (2021). The effects of consultation-based family-school engagement on student and parent outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 31(3), 278-306.
- Song, J. (2016). Emotions and language teacher identity: Conflicts, vulnerability, and transformation. *TESOL quarterly*, 50(3), 631-654.
- Souderjani, R. H., Darani, L. H., & Hosseinpour, N. (2022). To Be or Not to Be an
- Soutter, A. K., O'Steen, B., & Gilmore, A. (2014). The student well-being model: A conceptual framework for the development of student well-being indicators.
- Spaulding, S. (2017). Cognitive empathy. *The Routledge handbook of philosophy of empathy*, 13-21.
- Stefanou, C. R., Perencevich, K. C., DiCintio, M., & Turner, J. C. (2004). Supporting autonomy in the classroom: Ways teachers encourage student decision making and ownership. *Educational psychologist*, 39(2), 97-110.
- Stepien K, Baernstein A (2006). Educating for Empathy. *J Gen Inter Med*, 21:524–530
- Stevens, M. J., & Lane, A. M. (2001). Mood-regulating strategies used by athletes. *Athletic Insight*, 3(3), 1-12.

Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional learning communities: A review of the literature. *Journal of educational change*, 7(4), 221-258.

Stosic, M. D., Blanch-Hartigan, D., Aleksanyan, T., Duenas, J., & Ruben, M. A. (2022). Empathy, friend or foe? Untangling the relationship between empathy and burnout in helping professions. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 162(1), 89108.

Stryker, S. (2004). Integrating emotion into identity theory. In *Theory and research on human emotions*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Stryker, S. (2008). From Mead to a structural symbolic interactionism and beyond. *Annual review of sociology*, 34(1), 15-31.

Stryker, S., & Burke, P. J. (2000). The past, present, and future of an identity theory. *Social psychology quarterly*, 284-297.

Sucaromana, U. (2004). The relationship between emotional intelligence and achievement in English for Thai students in the lower secondary school. In B. Bartlett, F. Bryer, & D. Roebuck (Eds.), *Education: Weaving research into Practice* (Vol. 3, pp. 158-164). Nathan, QLD: Griffith University, School of Cognition, Language, and Special Education.

Sun, B., Wang, Y., Ye, Q., & Pan, Y. (2023). Associations of empathy with teacher–student interactions: A potential ternary model. *Brain Sciences*, 13(5), 767.

Sutton, R. E., & Wheatley, K. F. (2003). Teachers' emotions and teaching: A review of the literature and directions for future research. *Educational Psychology Review*, 15(4), 327-358.

Sutton, R., Mudrey-Camino, R., & Knight, C. (2009). Teachers' Emotion

Swain, M. (2013). The inseparability of cognition and emotion in second language learning. *Language teaching*, 46(2), 195-207.

Swan, M. (2013). The quantified self: Fundamental disruption in big data science and biological discovery. *Big data*, 1(2), 85-99.

Syed, M. A. (2010). Personality hardiness, job involvement and job burnout among teachers. *International journal of vocational and technical education*, 2(3), 36-40.

Tang, L.L & Zhao, Y.P. (2013). A study on the relationship between job burnout and its influencing factors of foreign language teachers in colleges and universities in Northwestern China. *Hei longjiang Higher Education Research*,

Tao, Y., and Jiang, Z. (2021). An investigation into career development contexts of university Russian language teachers in China (1949-2019) from the perspective of ecological theory. *Chin. Log Appl. Linguis.* 44, 166–186.

Taxer, J., & Gross, J. (2018). Emotion regulation in teachers: The “why” an “how”.

Taylor, L. A. (2017). How teachers become teacher researchers: Narrative as a tool for teacher identity construction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 61, 16-
Teacher Burnout and Emotional Empathy among K-12 Public School Teachers.

Teacher: Reconceptualizing Teachers’ Emotional Labor. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 122, 1 - 36.

Teachers’ Emotional Labor: a Systematic Review and Meta-analytic Investigation. *Educational Psychology Review*, 1-36.

Teaching and teacher education, 21(8), 899-916.

Teaching and Teacher Education.

Teaching Competency and Job Satisfaction in Predicting Attitudes towards the Teaching Profession in Primary and Secondary School Teachers. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 10(4), 92-121.

Tettegah, S., & Anderson, C. J. (2007). Pre-service teachers’ empathy and cognitions: Statistical analysis of text data by graphical models. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 32(1), 48-82.

The 'EMPATHICS' Vision. In *Positive psychology in SLA* (pp. 10-88). Multilingual Matters.

The mediating role of resilience between empathy and gratitude. *Current Psychology*, 1-10.

Thompson, N. M., Uusberg, A., Gross, J. J., & Chakrabarti, B. (2019). Empathy and emotion regulation: An integrative account. *Progress in brain research*, 247, 273-304.

Thompson, N. M., Uusberg, A., Gross, J. J., & Chakrabarti, B. (2019). Empathy and emotion regulation: An integrative account. *Progress in brain research*, 247, 273-304.

Tickle, L. (2000). Teacher probation resurrected: England 1999? 2000. *Journal of Education Policy*, 15(6), 701-713.

Timoštšuk, I., & Ugaste, A. (2012). The role of emotions in student teachers' professional identity. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 35, 421 - 433.

Tobias, S. (1979). Anxiety research in educational psychology. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 71(5), 573-582.

Tong, H. K., & Cheung, L. H. (2011). Cultural identity and language: A proposed framework for cultural globalisation and glocalisation. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 32(1), 55-69.

Toward a theoretical clarification. *Language Learning*, 39(2), 251-275.

Trends in cognitive sciences, 10(10), 435-441.

Trent, J. (2015). " Inclusive and Different?" Discourse, Conflict, and the Identity Construction Experiences of Preservice Teachers of English Language Learners in Australia. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(10), 7.

Trent, J., & DeCoursey, M. (2011). Crossing boundaries and constructing identities: the experiences of early career mainland Chinese English language teachers in Hong Kong. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(1), 65-78.

Trent, J., & Gao, X. (2009). 'At least I'm the type of teacher I want to be': Secondcareer English language teachers' identity formation in Hong Kong secondary schools. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(3), 253-270.

Trent, J., & Lim, J. (2010). Teacher identity construction in school–university partnerships: Discourse and practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(8), 1609-1618.

Tsang, K. (2011). Emotional labor of teaching. *Educational Research*, 2, 13121316.

Tschannen-Moran, M. (2001). Collaboration and the need for trust. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 39(4), 308-331.

Tsui, A. B. (2007). Complexities of identity formation: A narrative inquiry of an EFL teacher. *TESOL quarterly*, 41(4), 657-680.

Tsui, A. B. (2007). Complexities of identity formation: A narrative inquiry of an EFL teacher. *TESOL quarterly*, 41(4), 657-680.

Tudor, I. (2003). Learning to live with complexity: Towards an ecological perspective on language teaching. *System*, 31(1), 1-12.

Turner, J. H. (2005). *The sociology of emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Uğurlu, C., Polat, S., & Aksu, M. (2020). EMOTIONAL LABOUR AS A PREDICTOR
Unconstrained learning, 97-125.

Vähäsantanen, K., Hökkä, P., Eteläpelto, A., Rasku-Puttonen, H., & Littleton, K. (2008). Teachers' professional identity negotiations in two different work organisations. *Vocations and Learning*, 1(2), 131-148.

Valente, F. (2014). Empathy and servant-leadership: The complementary nature of simulation theory and theory of mind in education. *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, 10(1), 213-229.

van der Wal, M. M., Oolbekkink-Marchand, H. W., Schaap, H., & Meijer, P. C. (2019). Impact of early career teachers' professional identity tensions. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 80, 59-70.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & society*, 4(2), 249-283.

van Kleef, G. (2009). How emotions regulate social life: The emotions as social information (EASI) model. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 18(3), 184–188.

van Lier, L. (Ed.). (2004). *The ecology and semiotics of language learning: A sociocultural perspective*. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

van Oers, B. (2002). Fruits of polyphony: A commentary on a multiperspective analysis of mathematical discourse. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 11(2&3), 359–363.

Van Veen, K., & Slegers, P. (2006). How does it feel? Teachers' emotions in a context of change. *Journal of Curriculum studies*, 38(1), 85-111.

Van Veen, K., Slegers, P., & Van de Ven, P. H. (2005). One teacher's identity, emotions, and commitment to change: A case study into the cognitive–affective processes of a secondary school teacher in the context of reforms. *Teaching and teacher education*, 21(8), 917-934.

Varghese, L. (2006). Constructing a Worker Identity: Class, Experience, and Organizing in Workers' Awaaz. *Cultural Dynamics*, 18(2), 189-211.

Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. A. (2005). Theorizing language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of language, Identity, and Education*, 4(1), 21-44.

Viadero, D. (2007). Social-skills programs found to yield gains in academic subjects. *Education Week*, 27(16), 1-15.

Violence and victims, 18(1), 71-86.

Vogely, A. J. (1998). Listening comprehension anxiety: Students' reported sources and solutions. *Foreign Language Annals*, 31(1), 67-80.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.

Wang H.M., & Li M. (2015). A study on empathy and well-being of teachers in special education.

Wang Y. (2014). The influence of empathic competence on undergraduates' forgiveness under psychological stress. *Intelligence*, (3).

Wang, H., Hall, N., & Taxer, J. (2019). Antecedents and Consequences of

Wang, N., & Kang, J. (2023). The role of teacher empathy and immediacy in Chinese EFL students' affective learning outcomes: unveiling the associations. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1294891.

Wang, T. (2015). Title: Learner attitudes toward English and their effect on English performance: A study of junior secondary students in China. Journal: *English Language Teaching*, 8(3), 119-128

Wang, X.P. (2009). Similarities and differences of empathy between Chinese and Western Theories. *Journal of Shengyang Institute of Engineering (Social Science)*, 5(1), 1-6.

Wang, Y., & Bray, M. (2008). Public-Private Partnerships in Education: Insights from the Asia Pacific Region.

Warren, C. A. (2014). Towards a pedagogy for the application of empathy in culturally diverse classrooms. *The Urban Review*, 46, 395-419.

Warren, C. A. (2018). Empathy, teacher dispositions, and preparation for culturally responsive pedagogy. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 69(2), 169-183.

Washington: American Psychological Association.

Webb, J. (2014). Growing taller: The role of empathy and acceptance in building up followers. *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, 10(1), 231-247.

Weisz, E., Ong, D. C., Carlson, R. W., & Zaki, J. (2020). Building empathy through motivation-based interventions. *Emotion*. Advance online publication.

Welp, L. R., & Brown, C. M. (2014). Self-compassion, empathy, and helping intentions. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 9(1), 54-65.

Wentzel, K. R. (2004). Understanding classroom competence: The role of socialmotivational and self-processes. *Advances in child development and behavior*, 32, 213-241.

Wertz, F. J. (2011). *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry*. Guilford Press.

Wesely, P. M. (2012). Learner attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs in language learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 45(s1), s98-s117.

Western Journal of Communication, 74(5), 504-524.

Wharton, A. S. (2009). The sociology of emotional labor. *Annual review of sociology*, 147-165.

What is it really about?. *International Journal of caring sciences*, 1(3), 118.

- Wilkinson, R. (1995). Empathy, Form and Space: Problems in German
- Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International Management Review*, 15(1), 45-55.
- Wolff, D., & De Costa, P. I. (2017). Expanding the language teacher identity landscape: An investigation of the emotions and strategies of a NNEST. *The Modern Language Journal*, 101(S1), 76-90.
- Wondra, J. D., & Ellsworth, P. C. (2015). An appraisal theory of empathy and other vicarious emotional experiences. *Psychological review*, 122(3), 411.
- Woodward, K. (2018). Concepts of identity and difference. In *A Museum Studies Approach to Heritage* (pp. 429-440). Routledge.
- Wray, D., & Lewis, M. (1997). *Extending literacy: Children reading and writing non-fiction*. Psychology Press.
- Wu, C.G. (2004). The principle 'Zhong and Shu' and social justice in modern society. *Jiangxi Social Science*, (8), 109-113.
- Xu, Li. "The Role of Teachers' Beliefs in the Language Teaching-learning Process." *Theory & Practice in Language Studies (TPLS)* 2, no. 7 (2012).
- Xu, S., & Connelly, F. M. (2009). Narrative inquiry for teacher education and development: Focus on English as a foreign language in China. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(2), 219-227.
- Xun, Y, Sun, L. & Peng. F. (2014). Compilation and Test of the Identity Scale for Foreign Language Teachers in China. *Shandong Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*, 35 (05): 61-67.
- Xun, Y. (2012), The study on English Language Teacher Identity in Chinese High Schools. *Doctoral Dissertation of Shanghai Foreign Language University*.

Yan, J. X., & Horwitz, E. K. (2008). Learners' perceptions of how anxiety interacts with personal and instructional factors to influence their achievement in English: Yan, M. *College English Intercultural Communication Course*. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.

Yang, B.J. (2009). *The analects of Confucius*. Beijing: Zhong Hua Book Company.

Yang, S., & Bautista, D. D. (2008). Reflection, arts, and self-inquiry: A letter to other for negotiating Korean English teacher identity. *Reflective Practice*, 9(3), 293-305.

Yin, H.B. & Cao, T.S (2008). Teacher's Identity in Curriculum Reform-Institutional Change and Self-reconstruction. *Education Development Research*, (2).

Yin, H.B. (2007). Teacher emotion: an issue that needs to be addressed urgently in curriculum reform. *Educational Development Research*, (3), 131-135.

Yin, R. K. 1989. *Case study research: Design and methods*. Applied Social Research Series, Vol. 5. London: Sage.

Young, D. J. (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: What does language anxiety research suggest? *The Modern Language Journal*, 75(4), 426-439.

Yu H.L (2013). The promotion of teacher empathy on student academic performance: an ANV-based measurement. *MA dissertations*, Zhejiang Normal University.

Yu, L. (2001). Communicative language teaching in China: Progress and resistance. *TESOL quarterly*, 35(1), 194-198.

Yuan, R. (2019). A critical review on nonnative English teacher identity research: From 2008 to 2017. *Journal of multilingual and multicultural development*, 40(6), 518-537.

Yue, Y. P. & Ji, D.Y. (2017). The characteristics of work-family conflict among kindergarten teachers and their relationship with job burnout. *Preschool Education Research*, (1): 23-33.

- Yue, Z., Qin, Y., Li, Y., Wang, J., Nicholas, S., Maitland, E., & Liu, C. (2022). Empathy and burnout in medical staff: mediating role of job satisfaction and job commitment. *BMC public health*, 22(1), 1033.
- Yuhan, X. I. E., & Chen, G. E. (2013). Confucius' thoughts on moral education in China. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 9(4), 45-49.
- Zaki, J., Bolger, N., & Ochsner, K. (2008). It takes two: The interpersonal nature of empathic accuracy. *Psychological Science*, 19, 399–404. doi:10.1111/j.1467–9280.2008.02099.x
- Zembylas, M. (2003). EMOTION, RESISTANCE, AND SELF-FORMATION.
- Zembylas, M. (2003). Emotions and teacher identity: A poststructural perspective. *Teachers and teaching*, 9(3), 213-238.
- Zembylas, M. (2004). The emotional characteristics of teaching: An ethnographic study of one teacher. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20(2), 185-201.
- Zembylas, M. (2005). Beyond teacher cognition and teacher beliefs: The value of the ethnography of emotions in teaching. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 18(4), 465-487.
- Zembylas, M. (2006). *Teaching with emotion: A postmodern enactment*. IAP.
- ZHANG, Q., CHEN, C., LU, J., & ZHANG, P. (2016). The mechanism of emotional contagion. *Acta Psychologica Sinica*, 48(11), 1423.
- Zhang, R., & Zhong, J. (2012). The hindrance of doubt: Causes of language anxiety. *International journal of English linguistics*, 2(3), 27.
- Zhang, W. (2019). Regulating private tutoring in China: Uniform policies, diverse responses. *ECNU Review of Education*, 2(1), 25-43.

Zhang, W. (2021). Non-state actors in education: The nature, dynamics and regulatory implications of private supplementary tutoring. *Background Paper for the Global Education Monitoring Report*.

Zhang, W., & Bray, M. (2016). Shadow education: The rise and implications of private supplementary tutoring. In *Spotlight on China* (pp. 85-99). Brill.

Zhang, Y., & Xie, Y. (2016). Family background, private tutoring, and children's educational performance in contemporary China. *Chinese sociological review*, 48(1), 64-82.

Zhang, Z. (2022). Toward the role of teacher empathy in students' engagement in English language classes. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 880935.

Zhao, Q. (2022). On the Role of Teachers' Professional Identity and Well-Being in Their Professional Development. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13.

Zhou, S.Q. (2006). *Curriculum Development and Teacher Profession*. Beijing:

Zysberg, L., & Kasler, J. (2017). Learning disabilities and emotional intelligence. *The Journal of psychology*, 151(5), 464-476.