

JUNCHAO_PG1

by Junchao Zhang

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PG1 - FULL RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Student Details

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Start Date	1 st Oct 2023	End Date	30 th Sep 2026

PhD by Research	PhD Practice Based	PhD by Published Works	Professional Doctorate (including DBA, DProf, Ed D)	MPhil by Research	MPhil Practice Based
☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
MA by Research	MSc by Research	MRes			
☐	☐	☐			

Proposed Research

Current Proposed Title	
Understanding EFL Teachers' Emotion Regulation Strategies in Chinese Secondary Schools	
Background & Context	
With the advent of the 'affective turn' in applied linguistics in the early 2010s (Pavlenko, 2013; Swain, 2013), linguists started to approach long-standing problems from a different aspect (Dewaele et al, 2019). Unlike the traditional cognitive approach (Sharwood Smith, 2017), emotions emerged as the new focal point. Substantial empirical evidence over the last decade has revealed that both students and teachers can experience multifarious emotions during the language learning and teaching process, which can either hinder or improve the learning outcomes (Dewaele and Li, 2020). Despite this recognition, scant attention has been paid to the emotion regulation strategies employed by individuals (Bielak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2022). Researchers mainly focused on what emotions individuals experience but overlooked the 'affective strategies' used during the L2 learning process (Oxford, 2017, p. 214). In this context, the present study aims to fill such a research gap and will mainly focus on English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher in Chinese secondary schools. As indicated by Gross (2015), emotion regulation is a dynamic process in which individuals change the trajectory of emotions by choosing different strategies. The forms of the strategies were varied and could be confusing (ibid). For instance, to relieve anxiety, someone may take a deep breath, talk with a particular friend, or have a glass of wine. Therefore, it is necessary first to identify a systematic theoretical model. The most frequently used framework was	



2 Gross's five-type model in which emotion regulation strategies were categorized into 'situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change and response modulation' (Gross, 2015, pp. 7-9). With Gross's model, it was found that EFL teachers will often employ 'cognitive appraisal' and 'expressive suppression' to regulate their emotions (e.g., Alipour, Kashkouli and Ghadiri, 2021; Morris and King, 2018; Pappa and Hökkä, 2021). Nevertheless, such findings were often based on the Western teaching context and lacked enough empirical evidence on EFL teachers in China (Liu and Li, 2023). Thus, the first research question (RQ) of the study is as follows

RQ1: How do EFL teachers in Chinese secondary schools employ emotion regulation strategies, and does Gross's classic five-type model apply in the Chinese teaching context? 3

Meanwhile, since the study of emotion regulation among EFL teachers is still in its early phases (Greenier, Derakhshan and Fathi, 2021; Thumvichit, 2023), researchers primarily concentrate on the interplay between teaching practice and regulation strategies while the complex socio-cultural factors behind the strategies were not systematically explored (e.g., Lu and Zhang, 2021; Gkonou and Miller, 2023). Some researchers like Mesquita and Albert (2007); Yin (2016) and Jiang et al (2016) identified the cultural differences between Chinese and American teachers' emotion regulation strategies. They argued that Chinese teachers were more likely to 'suppress' their emotions because of the Confucian traditions while teachers in Western culture tend to express their emotions more actively (Jiang et al., 2016). Nevertheless, such generalizations may oversimplify the intricate impact of socio-cultural factors, especially considering the significant diversity among individuals in terms of gender, age, and educational background (Zhang et al., 2022). In such cases, the present study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the underlying reasons behind emotion regulation and the second research question is

RQ2: To what extent do socio-cultural factors influence the choice of emotion regulation strategies by EFL teachers?

Beyond the theoretical implications, emotion regulation holds practical significance in educational and psychological studies. According to Yang et al (2019), Chinese teachers' mental health is deteriorating due to the absence of overtime compensation, intense competition, and inadequate psychological support. Under such circumstances, choosing appropriate emotion regulation strategies might help them improve well-being and alleviate mental disorders (Kraiss et al., 2020). The third research question will therefore go beyond emotion regulation itself and try to answer the following: 4

RQ3: How could the adoption of emotion regulation strategies be related to EFL teachers' well-being? 5

Overall, this study will contribute to the knowledge of EFL teachers' emotion regulation strategies from three different aspects with each of them filling a crucial research gap in academia.

Aims and Objectives

The primary purpose of the research is to deepen the understanding of emotion regulation strategies employed by EFL teachers in Chinese secondary schools. Based on the research questions proposed in the previous section, three specific aims are expected to be achieved at the end of the study.

First of all, a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of EFL teachers' use of emotion regulation strategies will be gained. Guided by Gross (2015), the exploration at this stage would not only be descriptive but analytical as well. By conducting both quantitative and qualitative analysis, the study will first provide an overview of emotion regulation strategies used by EFL teachers after which a more detailed analysis of the individual differences will be presented. For instance, the study will analyse how the use of strategies differs among EFL teachers based on gender, age and their educational backgrounds.

After discerning the diverse preferences in selecting emotion regulation strategies among EFL teachers, the study will then explore the socio-cultural factors influencing these preferences. As indicated in Morris and King's study (2018), the choice of emotion regulation strategies is often related to teachers' beliefs, which are often influenced by the socio-cultural environment.

Last but not least, the third purpose concerns the practical implication of the study. By exploring the relationship between EFL teachers' well-being and their emotion regulation strategies, the research aims to offer EFL teachers practical suggestions for effectively regulating emotions. It is anticipated that the advice will empower EFL teachers in Chinese secondary schools to upregulate negative emotions and enhance overall well-being.  6

Proposed plan of work including timetable

Planned Development (e.g., submission of form, completion of chapter, submission of thesis)	Target Date
Draft and finalize the research proposal. Revise the proposal based on feedbacks from the supervisor and submit the research proposal form to the university. Obtain ethical approval for the research from the supervisor and the university.	1 st September 2024
Conduct an in-depth literature review to identify key theories and findings with regard to EFL teachers' emotion regulation	1 st September 2024 to 1 st November 2024
Draft the literature review chapter and submit it to the supervisor for feedbacks.	1 st November 2024 to 30 th December 2024
Return to China to collect the data: conducted semi-structured interviews and reflective journals research. Analyse the themes embedded in the qualitative data.	30 th December 2024 to 1 st February 2025
Develop the FLTER-Que  7 on identified themes and begin to collect the quantitative data (i.e., EFL teachers' emotion regulation strategies and their well-being level)	1 st February 2025 to 15 th March 2025
Conduct the second round of semi-structured interviews based on the questionnaire survey to identify the socio-	15 th March 2025 to 15 th April 2025

cultural factors influencing EFL teachers' choice of emotion regulation strategies	
Analyse the collected data; come back to the U.K. to draft the methodology chapter as well as the findings and discussion chapter	15 th April 2025 to 1 st November 2025
Revise and finalize each chapter based on supervisor's feedbacks	1 st November 2025 to 1 st February 2026
Finalize thesis for submission and prepared for the viva	1 st February 2026 to 30 th April 2026
Make any required revisions based on the viva and submit the final version	30 th April 2026 to 30 th May 2026

Proposed methodology

In order to answer the first and the third research question, a mixed approach including quantitative and qualitative methods will be employed. Semi-structured interviews will be used to collect EFL teachers' perceptions of the use of emotion regulation strategies. As a common way of collecting qualitative data, the semi-structured interview is guided with pre-determined questions but can also allow researchers to delve into subjects brought up by participants in a flexible way (Braun and Clarke, 2013). In the current study, the guided questions will be based on Gross's framework (2015) as the study tries to confirm the feasibility of the framework in a Chinese teaching context. comprehensive.

In addition to the interviews, reflective journals 8 will also be employed to examine participants' 'ongoing experience' and investigate the 'psychological processes within everyday situations' (Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli, 2003, p.580). Furthermore, when teachers record their emotion regulation strategies in the journal, they are acting as the 'co-researcher' of the study. All the ideas and interpretations are presented actively by the participants and thus can minimize the impact of 'researcher manipulation' in the data (Rose, 2020, p.349). After the collection of qualitative data, the study will employ thematic analysis to reveal the themes and structures of EFL teachers' emotion regulation strategies. As an efficient and flexible method, thematic analysis is often used to recognize, analyze, describe and illustrate themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Based on the identified themes as well as relevant literature, the study will develop the Foreign Language Teachers' Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (FLTER-Que), which will be distributed via Wenjuanxing to collect a large sample of the population. Wenjuanxing is a popular online questionnaire platform in China and has been widely used in many studies since well-known Western platforms like SurveyMonkey cannot be used in mainland China (Mei and Brown, 2018). 9

Descriptive analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) will be conducted to explore how the use of strategies varies from person to person and confirm whether the five-type model fits into a large population. Additionally, EFL teachers' well-being will be tested simultaneously via the 'World Health Organization - Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5)' questionnaire to achieve the third research goal. Containing only five statements, WHO-5 is a useful and efficient

self-report questionnaire to measure individuals' well-being levels (WHO, 1998). Its good validity and reliability have also been proved in clinical trials (Topp et al., 2015).

As for the second objective which is to identify reasons behind the choices of emotion regulation strategies, the qualitative method will be solely used as it allows me to explore the underlying socio-cultural factors in detail and depth (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020). Based on participants' responses during the questionnaire survey, they will be invited to attend a semi-structured interview. A sequence of questions relating to the reasons of choosing certain emotion regulation strategies will be asked.

Ultimately, it is vital to consider the ethical issues throughout the entire research process given that the current study addresses many sensitive topics like individuals' well-being. Confidentiality will be prioritized, and ethical approval will be obtained from the university and the supervisor before collecting any data. During the data collection process, I will explicitly provide the objectives and the context of the study, trying to make the study as transparent as it can to the participants. Informed consent will be obtained before participants answer the questions, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of their rights and obligations in the study (e.g., to withdraw from the study at any time).



Introductory bibliography:

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Braun, V and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, pp. 77–101. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

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Bielak, J. and Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A. (2022) 'Language teachers' interpersonal learner-directed emotion-regulation strategies', *Language Teaching Research*, 26(6), pp. 1082–1105. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820912352>.

Dewaele, J. M., Chen, X., Padilla, A. M., and Lake, J. (2019) 'The flowering of positive psychology in foreign language teaching and acquisition research', *Frontiers in psychology*, 10, pp. 21–28. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02128>

Dewaele, J.M, and Li, C. (2020). 'Emotions in second language acquisition: A critical review and research agenda'. *Foreign Language World*, 196 (1), pp. 34–49. Available at: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/32797/3/32797.pdf>

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Greenier, V., Derakhshan, A. and Fathi, J. (2021) 'Emotion regulation and psychological well-being in teacher work engagement: A case of British and Iranian English language teachers', *System*, 97, p. 102446. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102446>.

Gkonou, C. and Miller, E.R. (2023) 'Relationality in language teacher emotion regulation: Regulating emotions through, with and for others', *System*, 115, p. 103046. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103046>.

Hennink, M., Hutter, I. and Bailey, A. (2020) *Qualitative research methods*. Los Angeles: Sage

Jiang, J., Vauras, M., Volet, S., and Wang, Y. (2016) 'Teachers' emotions and emotion regulation strategies: Self- and students' perceptions', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 54, pp. 22–31. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.11.008>.

Kraiss, J.T., Ten Klooster, P., Moskowitz, J. and Bohlmeijer, E. (2020) 'The relationship between emotion regulation and well-being in patients with mental disorders: A meta-analysis', *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 102, p. 152189. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsy.2020.152189>.

Lu, H. and Zhang, X. (2021) 'Emotional Responses Toward a New Research Policy Among Academics in a Chinese University', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, p. 777472. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.777472>.

Liu, H and Li, Y. (2023) 'A study on junior high school EFL teachers' emotion regulation strategies', *Basic Foreign Language Education*, 25(2), pp. 14-21

Background reading

Mesquita, B and Albert, D. (2007) 'The Cultural Regulation of Emotions', in J. J. Gross (ed.) *Handbook of Emotion Regulation*. New York: The Guilford Press, pp. 486-503

Mei, B. and Brown, G.T.L. (2018) 'Conducting Online Surveys in China', *Social Science Computer Review*, 36(6), pp. 721–734. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439317729340>.

Morris, S. and King, J. (2018) 'Teacher Frustration and Emotion Regulation in University Language Teaching', *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 41(4), pp. 433–452. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1515/cjal-2018-0032>.

Oxford, R.L. (2017) *Teaching and Researching Language Learning Strategies: Self-regulation in Context*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.

Pavlenko, A. (2013) "The affective turn in SLA: from 'affective factors' to 'language desire' and 'commodification of affect'", in D. Gabryś-Barker and J. Bielska (eds) *The affective dimension in second language acquisition*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, pp.3-28.

Pappa, S and Hökkä, P. (2021) 'Emotion regulation and identity negotiation: A short story analysis of Finnish language teachers' emotional experiences teaching pupils of immigrant background', *Teacher Educator*, 56(1) pp. 61-82. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2020.1785069>.

Rose, H. (2019). 'Diaries and journals: Collecting insider perspectives in second language research', in J. McKinley and H. Rose (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. 1st edn. New York: Taylor and Francis, pp. 348-360.

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Yin, H. (2016) 'Knife-like mouth and tofu-like heart: emotion regulation by Chinese teachers in classroom teaching', *Social Psychology of Education*, 19(1), pp. 1-22. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-015-9319-5>.

Yang, R., You, X., Zhang, Y., Lian, L. and Feng, W. (2019) 'Teachers' mental health becoming worse: the case of China'. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 70, p. 102077. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jedudev.2019.102077>.

Zhang, N., Zhang, K., Wang, J., Sun, X. (2022) 'Distract or Reappraise? The Mechanism of Cognitive Emotion Regulation Choice and Its Influential Factors', *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 15, pp. 3699-3708. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S389835>.

Facilities and resources available for the investigation: please indicate if you expect to need any special resources

Wide range of books, journals and the relevant research materials (e.g., online resources) will be accessed through UWTSD library, Web of Science database and Google Scholar database. Additionally, as the present study focuses on the use of emotion regulation by Chinese EFL teachers, a number of research materials related with English teaching in China will be accessed from China's National Centre for Philosophy and Social Science Documentation, a free online database established by Ministry of Education and Chinese Academy of Social Science. In addition, the software SPSS

and Nvivo will be obtained through UWTSD IT service, which will allow me to conduct the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Intellectual Property IP

It is anticipated that Intellectual Property (IP) will be produced as a result of this research.

Tick ✓

	YES	NO
Is the IP already subject to a separate agreement with a third party (e.g. employer, sponsor or external funder)? If so please provide details below	☐	☒
Is the research dependent upon background IP owned by: If so, please provide details below	UWTSD ☒	A third party ☐

Tick ✓

I understand that:	YES	NO
If any party other than the student is likely to be involved in the development of IP a separate IP agreement will be needed and it may be necessary for the student to assign the IP rights to the University.	☒	☐
If there are no third parties involved in the creation of the IP the student is deemed to own the IP, however should the student wish to commercially exploit their IP and require the assistance of the University to do so, they will be required to assign their IP to the University. https://www.uwt.ac.uk/iiced/protecting-innovation-and-creativity---intellectual-property/	☒	☐

Student Signature

Signature or Print Name:	Junchao Zhang	Date: 10 th December 2023
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FINAL GRADE

74/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

This is an excellent thesis proposal which explores the research topic very effectively.

You provide an interesting rationale for the study and relate to extensive relevant background reading and your awareness of the Thesis Proposal module content.

You have succeeded in identifying a key area for further investigation in relation to current practice. This response indicates a level of critical understanding congruent with this level.

The style is coherent and reflective. You have obviously gained a great deal from this module and you are aware of the limitations of a small scale study. Good awareness of the research methodology, clear research questions and awareness

of shortcomings and this is communicated clearly.

You might like to consider:

1. Making further references to the research methods literature. Refer to Punch (2009) and Thomas (2009) as discussed in class.

2. It might be useful to include more detail in the Gantt chart, outlining what the supervision team will focus on in detail.

3. Refer in further detail to Ethical Guidance:

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/media/uwtsd-website/content-assets/documents/research/REICoP-July-2022.pdf>

4. Explaining how theory relates to Emotional Intelligence in further detail earlier in the proposal.

5. Use Harvard referencing consistently.

6. Refer to Ethical considerations in more detail quoting appropriate guidelines from UWTSD.

I enjoyed reading your research proposal. Congratulations and the best of luck with the remainder of your course.

PAGE 1



Comment 1

teachers - plural. Check proof-reading.

PAGE 2



Comment 2

reference?



Comment 3

These are 2 separate RQs!



Comment 4

Give examples of these factors. Mention the work you will adopt to write your research questions.



Comment 5

check wording - will or could?

PAGE 3



Comment 6

Is the focus on regulating emotions or providing coping strategies?



Comment 7

Explain fully. What role does the supervisory team take here?

PAGE 4



comprehensive.

comprehensive coverage of content and theory.



Comment 8

Why are reflective journals particularly useful in the study?



Comment 9

How secure is this platform?

PAGE 5



Comment 10

Refer to ethical guidelines from UWTSD and BERA (2018)

PAGE 6

QM

Background reading

Evidence of wide reading

PAGE 7

PAGE 8
