

Chinese EFL University Teachers' Affective Experiences for Continuous Professional Development

Jing Wu

Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand

Email: wujing@hbust.edu.cn

Received August 23, 2023; **Revised** October 4, 2023; **Accepted** December 15, 2023

Abstract

Affective experiences are of critical importance in the teaching profession, exerting a significant influence on teachers' well-being and satisfaction during their Continuous Professional Development (CPD). In this study, a qualitative case study methodology was used to explore the positive and negative affective experiences of Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university teachers in the context of Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Nine teachers were invited to participate in in-depth interviews, selected to represent differences in gender, job title, educational background, and university rankings. Oral storytelling and reflective writing were also utilized as additional methods to gather comprehensive data. The data was managed by employing affectivities from the combined Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) to extract Chinese EFL university teachers' affectivities from both positive and negative perspectives. The research results were as follows: a) The perceptions of negative affect, such as nervousness, helplessness, and distress, were reported as the highest experiences for teachers during the process of CPD. From the affect component perceived, five particular types of negative affects were identified: anger, contempt, disappointment, dissatisfaction, and helplessness. b) On the other hand, the perceptions of positive affect, such as feeling alert, proud, happy, and grateful, were higher than others. Additionally, a positive affect described as "contented" was detected and added. c) The major factors resulting in teachers' negative affect experiences are gender, educational background, and job title, while the factor influencing teachers' positive affect experiences is mainly the university rank. Building on this foundation, the present study explored

the potential factors that influence teachers' perceptions of affect and the methods they use to regulate positive and negative effects in the context of CPD.

Keywords: Chinese EFL university teachers; affective experiences; Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Introduction

In the educational system, teaching is a practical activity imbued with emotion (Chen, 2016). One of the most important aspects in professional development for teachers is their affect connection to their profession (Spilt & Thijs, 2011). In China, the education system has long encouraged teaching with a touch of affection, which requires teachers to be affectively sensitive to their teaching surroundings. It serves an ontological function for teachers' professional development and offers psychological support for their growth in the profession. Teachers' affect in understanding their professional development cannot be overemphasized. The educational systems, cultures, and communities in which individual teachers are engaged are key influencing variables of teachers' affect, and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a crucial part of teacher education (Hu, 2014; Li, 2020). Higher education is the only educational system that is frequently assessed and compared in a global context. As English serves as a worldwide language, its education in China is assigned great importance in terms of teaching effectiveness and practicality. Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university teachers are making great efforts to meet the demands of the continuously updating requirements of the education system.

The active channeling and rational management of professional affect among EFL teachers, as well as the optimization of their affective experiences, are crucial factors for their well-being and continuous development (Zhang & Wen, 2021). Zhao (2014) investigated the drivers of affective experiences that influence the professional development of EFL teachers in higher education. By focusing on individual affective experiences while considering the broader context and analyzing specific individual affects within a community, Zhao (2014) emphasized the positive significance of these experiences in educational practice. Examining teachers' affective experiences thoroughly is crucial for their overall well-being and professional advancement since it fosters positive and healthy development within the teaching community.

Chinese EFL university teachers' affective factors have an influential effect on their interactions with the surroundings. Positive affect encourages teachers in the actions and choices

(Gao et al., 2018), which promotes the realization of the target professional identities. Conversely, negative affect impedes the achievement of their ideal professional identity (Huang & Guo, 2019), even high-quality self-identity of teaching profession. Positive ones foster empathy, enhancing the well-being of students, whereas negative ones result from ineffective external emotional regulation forced intrinsic emotional self-regulation in teachers (Xiao & Tian, 2023). The study underscores the imperative of attaining a nuanced comprehension of the affective dimensions of Chinese EFL university teachers, to facilitate a profound understanding of their psychological well-being and encourage proactive self-care.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the intricate affective dimensions experienced by Chinese EFL university teachers within the context of Continuous Professional Development.
2. To explore the demographic factors that influence teachers' positive and negative affect during the process of CPD.

Literature Review

1. Positive Affect and Negative Affect

Affect is highlighted for its importance in understanding human behavior and cognition (Forgas, 2008). Two dimensions, Positive Affect and Negative Affect, were investigated from a psychological perspective. Positive Affect (PA), as a human characteristic, describes the extent to which people experience positive emotions while interacting with others and their surroundings as a result of this affect (Ashby, 1999). People with high positive affect are open-minded, sociable, and helpful. They have more positive self-qualities and tend to be more goal-oriented (Paterson, 2015; Li, 2017).

Negative Affect (NA) refers to the experience of negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety, and anger. It is a personality variable that is associated with the experience of negative emotions and a poor self-concept (Watson & Clark, 1989). As Watson and Clark (1988) state, it is a dispositional trait characterized by a tendency to experience negative emotions frequently and intensely.

People with PA maintain their motivation and engagement towards their goals, and continuously regulate their actions towards achieving them (Carver & Scheier, 1990). PA is related to a better quality of social interaction and increased engagement in social contact (Berry &

Hansen, 1996). Additionally, it is positively correlated with creativity in organizational work (Amabile et al., 2005). It has been proven that, across different cultures, PA has a strong positive correlation with life satisfaction within the structure of subjective well-being (Casas et al., 2020). Moreover, it positively influences the allocation of significant societal resources (Zolotoy et al., 2021). In educational studies, it has been demonstrated that teachers who exhibit PA tend to have elevated levels of self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Lavy & Eshet, 2018). Furthermore, it increases the likelihood of experiencing teacher enthusiasm (Moè et al., 2010; Burić et al., 2018, 2020).

Studies have shown that people with high levels of NA experience negative emotions frequently. As a result, they might have a higher risk of developing mental health problems and physical health issues (Fredrickson, 2004). NA can act as an obstacle for individuals to express and act in line with their authentic personality, potentially leading to psychological health problems if not addressed with proper intervention (Ferzan et al., 2020). Indeed, NA is a natural part of being human and cannot be completely avoided. Experiencing relatively low NA can be beneficial, especially in conflictual social communities (Birditt, 2019).

2. Positive and Negative Affect Schedule

There are three types of measures of mood/emotion/affect in the psychological field: (1) measures of emotional trait dimensions (transitional states, stable states), e.g., Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) and NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) professional manual (Costa & McCrae, 1992); TEIQue (Petrides & Furnham, 2006) ; (2) measurements of different states and dimensions of emotion, for example, state measurements such as the State of Mood Measure (POMS2), State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), etc.; dimensional measurements such as the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson & Clark, 1988) and the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (Costa & McCrae, 1992) as self-assessment models; (3) Three-step affective measures like BRS (Smith et al., 2008). Among all, the dimensional measure PANAS has been regarded as a highly reliable measure for non-clinical populations, and its construct validity has been well validated (Crawford, 2004).

The PANAS is an instrument designed by Watson and Clark (1988) to measure PA and NA as two dominant independent dimensions of affective structure. It consists of two scales of 10 items each. The 10 items for PA and NA are indicated as PA: 1. Interested, 2. Excited, 3. Strong, 4. Enthusiastic, 5. Proud, 6. Alert, 7. Inspired, 8. Determined, 9. Attentive, 10. Active; and NA: 1. Scared, 2. Upset, 3. Hostile, 4. Guilty, 5. Jittery, 6. Nervous, 7. Afraid, 8. Ashamed, 9. Irritable, 10. Distressed. The PANAS is a reliable and valid measure for assessing both PA and NA, and it

exhibits good convergent and discriminant properties. It shows trait-like stability with longer-term instructions. The psychometric properties of the PANAS have been widely tested across different populations and contexts, providing robust evidence for its accuracy in assessing human affective experiences. It is a valuable tool to detect the affective states with precision.

Based on the rationale presented earlier, the author undertook an approach involving the selection of different dimensions of PANAS (Watson & Clark, 1988) to categorize the corresponding emotional predictors concerning the affective experiences of Chinese EFL university teachers in the context of CPD. Nevertheless, Ekkekakis (2013) highlighted that the original development of PANAS aimed to encompass a combination of diverse emotional structures, moods, and affectivities, potentially limiting its ability to fully capture all the specific emotional experiences under investigation in this study. Hence, during the validation process of this study, the author made efforts to address the experiences of other affective categories, and as a result, the PANAS by Qiu et al. (2008) was adopted.

Qiu et al. (2008) localizes the PANAS in the Chinese context by maintaining the original 20 affective items while refining the scale's structure to align with a Chinese two-dimensional affective model. The participants in the study were undergraduate students aged between 18 and 23 years. Specifically, the author excluded non-emotion items and retained the principal affective elements. That is, the author retained positive items such as "active, enthusiastic, excited, and proud" (Qiu et al., 2008, p.251), and verified a group of descriptive words for positive affect items, which comprised words such as "excited, energetic, joyful, happy, and grateful" (Qiu et al., 2008, p.251). As for the negative dimension, seven negative descriptive items remained the same as in PANAS (Watson, 1988), which include "ashamed, upset, scared, jittery, afraid, guilty, irritable" (Qiu et al., 2008, p.251). Additionally, the Chinese version of PANAS introduced two other negative items, "terrified" and "annoyance" (Qiu et al., 2008, p.251). The psychometric analysis of the modified scale conducted by Qiu et al. (2008) indicates that it is a valid and reliable measure of the affective schedule, demonstrating both differentiability and construct validity. The findings provide substantial evidence supporting the effectiveness of the revised PANAS in evaluating affective experiences within Chinese populations.

3. CPD with affective factors

Aligned with the principles of rational constructivism, scholars have progressively focused their efforts on exploring the perceptual dimensions of language education. Bronfenbrenner (2005) emphasizes the interplay between human development and the surrounding environment,

accentuating ecological considerations that transcend conventional rational studies and extend beyond the linear teaching approach. Consequently, the education field has undergone a shift in its focus towards examining the dynamic interaction between teachers and their environment, leading to an expansion of research on affective territory beyond the realm of teacher–student interactions. Studies focused on teacher development, encompassing areas such as teacher well-being, teacher retention, teacher burnout, and teacher attrition, have established robust causal connections between teachers' PA and NA. In addition, teacher affect is intricately intertwined with the presence of internal and external factors within its ecological environment (Zhang & Wen, 2021).

In recent years, the field of emotional and affective studies has expanded beyond theoretical and methodological analyses (Hu & Wang, 2014; Li & Zheng, 2021; Gu & Gu, 2015), to include investigations into the emotional experiences of teachers in various contexts. Indeed, researchers have notably investigated various aspects, such as the prevalence and underlying factors of teacher burnout (Fan, 2015; Tang, 2011; Zhang, 2012), the effectiveness of academic emotional regulation strategies adopted by teachers (Gu & Gu, 2019), the correlation between emotion regulation and cognitive development in novice teachers (Qin, 2019), and the meta-emotional and meta-professional capacities of highly motivated teachers (Li & Wen, 2020). The comprehension and effective management of affective factors in EFL education in China hold paramount significance. Their implications are extensive, and thus, their importance cannot be overstated. Nevertheless, limited research has delved into the comprehensive and nuanced exploration of PA and NA experiences among Chinese EFL university teachers. To bridge this gap in the literature, this study endeavors to offer a comprehensive and intricate analysis of Chinese EFL university teachers' affective experiences, encompassing both PA and NA, within the context of CPD. By doing so, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the factors influencing teacher well-being and professional development in the EFL education setting in China. These insights can potentially contribute to the enhancement of teaching practices and the overall effectiveness of EFL education in the Chinese context.

Conceptual Framework

The affective experiences of Chinese EFL university teachers bear substantial significance for teaching efficacy, contributing to the creation and maintenance of an environmentally and psychologically sustainable teaching and learning milieu. Teachers undergo a spectrum of both PA

and NA, and a nuanced exploration of affectivities within CPD can intricately intertwine with both PA and NA throughout the process of CPD.

The conceptual framework is proposed in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Research Design

1. Participants

Table 1 Basic data on the interviewees

Interviewee's case number	Gender	Job title	Education background	University ranking
Case 1	F	Lecturer	MA	Second-class undergraduate university
Case 2	F	Lecturer	MA	Vocational college
Case 3	F	Lecturer	PhD	Second-class undergraduate university
Case 4	F	Lecturer	MA	Vocational college
Case 5	M	Associate professor	MA	First-class undergraduate university
Case 6	F	Lecturer	PhD	First-class undergraduate university
Case 7	M	Lecturer	PhD	First-class undergraduate university
Case 8	M	Lecturer	PhD	First-class undergraduate university
Case 9	F	Lecturer	MA	Second-class undergraduate university

Given the contextual and situational limitations of the multidimensional nature of affective experience in research, its complexity and variability present challenges when relying solely on scales for measurement (Li, 2021). To address these complexities and capture a deeper understanding, this study adopted qualitative methods and employed Nvivo12 for a rigorous

analysis of the interview data. The study incorporated four key aspects, namely gender, job title, educational background, and university rank, and employs purposive sampling to select interviewees deliberately. This sampling method allowed the author to gain a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the affective journey experienced by EFL university teachers during their CPD. Participants in this study were drawn from diverse university EFL teachers across five distinct regions, Henan, Yunnan, Chongqing, Zhejiang, and Hubei, as illustrated in Table 1. A case number was used to protect the confidentiality of the study participants' personal data.

2. Instruments and data collection

The research instruments employed in this study included in-depth interviews, oral storytelling, and reflective writing, which were utilized to gather detailed and comprehensive data. The advantage of utilizing in-depth interviews is the ability to gather more comprehensive and nuanced information compared to other data collection methods. Moreover, in-depth interviews often create a relaxed atmosphere that encourages participants to engage in open and candid conversations about their experiences or programs, as opposed to the more formal and structured nature of surveys (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Reflective writing can lead to a deeper understanding of their own thought processes and practices (Carson et al., 2012), and participants kept their reflections, which were then sent to the author. A confidentiality agreement was signed with the interviewees in the research, whether they were conducted in person or online. With the permission of some interviewees, the interviews were recorded. However, some interviewees declined recording, so notes were taken to capture the main ideas during the interviews. After the interviews, the transcription was completed by the author, and the case nodes were constructed and subsequently themed using NVivo 12, and the data were carefully analyzed to identify affective characteristics.

After transcription, the author consulted a psychological expert to discuss and distinguish the deductive process of the affective items. In order to define the positive PA and NA experiences, confirm the consistency of the affect experiences with extensive and nuanced descriptions, and validate the experiential one-to-one correspondence between the professional affective experiences and the PA and NA experiences, an agreement was reached with the psychologist. The coding of this study combined both the PANAS (Watson, 1998) and the PANAS localized in the Chinese context by Qiu et al. (2008). The rationale behind using Watson's (1988) version of PANAS in this study is due to the specific characteristics of Qiu et al.'s (2008) version of PANAS in China. Qiu et al.'s (2008) version targeted participants aged 18–23, who had no

working experience and relatively fewer social connections. As a result, the affective experiences captured by Qiu et al.'s (2008) version might be constrained to a specific age group with limited life and work experiences. Therefore, to ensure a more comprehensive and nuanced assessment of affective experiences in the context of CPD, Watson's (1988) version of PANAS was considered a more suitable complement. Considering the potential variety of affective experiences originating or stimulated in the process of CPD, the psychological expert also helped analyze the corresponding affective dimensions in detail by carefully comparing the items from the two PANAS versions and aligning them with the contents of the in-depth interviews, oral storytelling, and reflective writing. This was done to gain a deeper understanding of the detailed distribution of PA and NA dimensions within the current CPD context in China.

Consequently, the deductive coding approach was employed to conduct the analysis. The themes identified in the research encompassed two dimensions derived from PANAS (Watson, 1988) and the localized Chinese version of PANAS by Qiu et al. (2008). For the main axis coding, the descriptive items of affect found in the two versions of PANAS were used as codes. Specifically, the themes related to PA experiences were represented by 14 descriptive words: active, alert, attentive, determined, energetic, enthusiastic, excited, grateful, happy, inspired, interested, joyful, proud, and strong. On the other hand, the themes associated with NA experiences were captured using 12 descriptive words: scared, afraid, jittery, irritable, hostile, guilty, ashamed, upset, distressed, terrified, annoyed, and nervous. The 26 descriptive words from the two versions of PANAS were meticulously matched with a one-to-one corresponding connection, forming the foundation for the affect coding procedure. Both PA and negative NA were used as the basis for coding. In this process, detailed representational vocabulary and sentence segments used by Chinese EFL university teachers were systematically extracted from the interview texts. These expressions were carefully verified to discern implicit affective elements embedded within them.

Research Results

1. The affective dimensions experienced by Chinese EFL university teachers in the context of CPD

After thoroughly reading and reviewing the original interview manuscript, the data were categorized based on the affective experiences related to CPD among Chinese university EFL teachers. During this process, localized concepts specific to the Chinese cultural context were

extracted and integrated into the analysis. Coding revealed that the dimensions of PA experiences precisely aligned with the affect attributes of the PANAS. However, there was a slight discrepancy in the description of affect experiences within the interview data. PA, as "contented," was detected and added to the theme. Following a second round of validation and rechecking with participants, this study identified five NA qualities that are unique to the CPD of Chinese university EFL teachers.

To ensure the accuracy of the coding process, participants were invited to provide detailed descriptions of their feelings and offer descriptive words that corresponded to their affective experiences. Through a collaborative process, an agreement was reached on the specific descriptive words that were utilized in the coding data. As a result, the following five words were added to the coding framework: contempt, anger, helplessness, dissatisfaction, and disappointment. To identify affective experiences, the researchers adapted the spindle code from items in the two versions of the PANAS. Representative statements from the interview text were then coded accordingly using the spindle code. The coding results revealed a disparity between the PANAS (Watson, 1998; Qiu et al. 2008) and the affective dimensions experienced by Chinese EFL university teachers. Specifically, certain PA and NA dimensions were found to be absent compared to the PANAS. Notably, six NA dimensions were missing among the Chinese EFL university teachers. These were afraid, ashamed, hostile, irritable, scared, and terrified. Figure 2 illustrates the perceptions of NA during the process of CPD, indicating that feelings of nervousness, helplessness, and distress were notably prominent among the participants. In addition, the various dimensions of affect were found to be closely linked to the participants' current status of professional development.

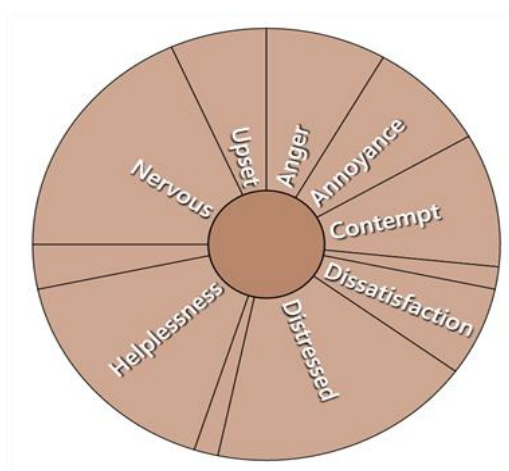


Figure 2. The distribution of NA

The observed phenomenon revealed that Chinese EFL university teachers in the process of CPD exhibited robust emotional regulation strategies, indicating a commitment to avoiding extreme affective experiences. Notably, extreme NA experiences appeared to be essentially absent among the teachers. The findings also indicated that teachers possessed strong self-perception, self-identity control, and high professional moral qualities. Their subconscious emotional experiences aligned with their actual and expected identity. Teachers' perceptions of affect revealed the presence of five specific types of NA: anger, contempt, disappointment, dissatisfaction, and helplessness. These affective experiences were found to be directly related to the implementation of administrative constructs and adherence to teaching rules and regulations, as evidenced in Cases 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8.

Figure 3 showed that teachers' perceptions of PA, such as being alert, proud, happy, and grateful, were more prominent than other affective dimensions. The analysis revealed an overlap between PA identified in both versions of PANAS. Importantly, the affect "attentive" exhibited a two-layer structure. This finding suggested that teachers place a strong emphasis on being "attentive," as evidenced by their heightened concern for their work and family, aligning well with the typical professional characteristics of teachers.

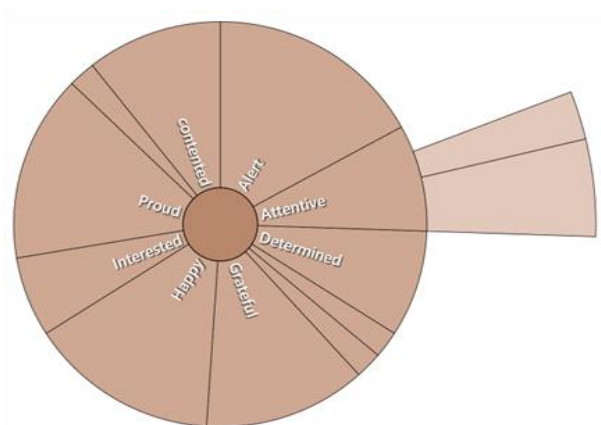


Figure 3. The distribution of PA

Both figures indicated that the perceptions of PA and NA in the context of CPD among Chinese EFL university teachers were relatively concentrated. Nevertheless, the dimensions of affect were found to be diversified, spanning a broader range.

2. Demographic factors influencing NA of Chinese EFL university teachers

2.1 Gender differences in the affective experiences of Chinese EFL university teachers

The newly detected affective experience "contempt," as observed in Case 5 and Case 7, was found to be prevalent among individuals of both genders, as indicated in Table 1. As teachers stated:

Case 4: *"We are in a corporate management model; the dean and the deputy dean don't need to have any special degrees or qualifications or job titles. They are managers, and they don't need to have a professional background or teaching skills, of course, they don't need to be involved in any academic research. They are safe in a full-fledged cadre of state enterprises. They don't need subject knowledge, and just promoted by a leader of the company to manage our school."* (contempt)

Case 8: *"The lesson itself is a subjective interpretation of the content by the teacher, a process that is indeed intended to build positive emotions in the teaching scenario, but if the school administration mechanically and excessively subdivides the elements of the teaching process and then makes a so-called high degree of quantification, this actually defeats the fundamental purpose of teaching and learning, and is also a failure for understanding teaching and learning. Personally, I don't agree with it."* (contempt)

Female teachers experienced an exceptionally high level of "helplessness," as indicated in Table 2, with a percentage of 80%, which was notably significant. This heightened sense of "helplessness" could eventually lead to "disappointment," and it was observed that teacher attrition occurred in situations of extreme helplessness, as stated by a teacher in her journey. Detailed evidence further demonstrated this trajectory, ultimately resulting in resignation, as observed in Case 2.

Case 2: *"It's hard for teachers like me who are single-minded, both to get work done well and to get the kids taken good care of, and then as the two kids getting older, I have to take the full responsibility for their studies, I feel like I can't really hold on anymore, it's too helplessness and tiring for me all day long."* (helplessness)

Case 2: *"I found it is difficult to assess a higher title and I didn't earn much, and the children have to be taken care of, then I resigned and stopped working in that college."* (disappointment)

Table 2 The distribution of negative affect in relation to gender difference, educational background, job title.

	Gender		Educational background		Job title	
	M (3)	F (6)	M.A. (5)	PhD (4)	Lec. (8)	Assoc. Prof. (1)
Anger	100%	0%	20%	80%	80%	20%
Annoyance	40%	60%	60%	40%	100%	0%
Contempt	50%	50%	50%	50%	100%	0%
Disappointment	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%	0%
Dissatisfaction	0%	100%	50%	50%	100%	0%
Distressed	54.55%	45.45%	27.27%	72.73%	90.91%	9.09%
Guilty	0%	100%	0%	100%	100%	0%
Helplessness	20%	80%	50%	50%	100%	0%
Jittery	50%	50%	0%	100%	100%	0%
Nervous	63.64%	36.36%	18.18%	81.82%	90.91%	9.09%
Upset	100%	0%	0%	100%	100%	0%
Total	50%	50%	33.33%	66.67%	95%	5%
Unique	16.67%	8.33%	6.67%	16.67%	11.88%	5.00%

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the gender differences in affective experiences, the code query revealed that male teachers (16.67%) experienced a higher prevalence of negative affect compared to female teachers (8.33%) in the process of CPD as can be seen in Table 2. Moreover, negative affect was coded more prominently in relation to male teachers for four specific items, namely, anger, distressed, nervous, and upset as shown in Table 2.

In the context of intra-professional division of labor, Chinese EFL university departments often exhibited a relatively low representation of male teachers, with male teachers being particularly scarce in EFL departments. Consequently, they might receive certain preferential treatment in terms of teaching assignments and resource allocation.

Regarding the intra-family division of labor, there had been a gradual increase in the involvement of men in child-rearing responsibilities. However, when considering academic output, the rate of male dissertation output with family rearing responsibilities remained largely unchanged, while it decreased by approximately 20% for women (Morgan, 2021). Female teachers exhibited a sense of helplessness concerning their familial and childcare responsibilities, whereas male teachers displayed higher levels of NA associated with their professional roles. The higher expectations placed on male teachers within the profession resulted in increased stress

compared to their female counterparts. Consequently, this heightened stress might have contributed to negative displacement in affective dimensions, potentially serving as a source of negative affect for male teachers.

2.2 The impact of educational background differences on affective experiences in Chinese EFL university teachers

In addition to annoyance, the code query revealed 11 perceived NA experiences, with eight of them being particularly strong. The degree to which NA experiences, such as anger, distress, nervousness, and upset, were perceived, was found to be proportional to the participants' educational degrees; individuals with higher educational backgrounds reported a greater degree of NA experiences. As shown in Table 2, the prevalence of NA was 6.67% for participants with a Master's degree, but it increased to 16.67% for those with a PhD.

According to the current situation of the development of EFL faculties in China, PhDs play a crucial role in the advancement of their departments. However, in real ecological settings, the inter-institutional recognition of PhDs' academic achievements is not proportional to their intellectual labor efforts in the EFL discipline, particularly in terms of resource allocation and multidisciplinary competition with other departments in the university, as evident in Case 7.

Case 7: *“My academic achievements are no less than those members, but in some faculties, some teachers were able to get their job title promotions, and I have not been able to get it for several years’ hard work. There is indeed something about the assessment system that I cannot accept.”*

Moreover, the influence of affiliation on the academic career development of university teachers is becoming increasingly apparent in higher education. It has been observed that teachers with a more extensive affiliation are more likely to experience greater academic career development (Day & Leitch, 2001). Academic affiliation has emerged as a source of confusion for many EFL teachers in their pursuit of CPD. This has led some highly motivated EFL teachers to question their self-identity and professional development, ultimately resulting in a series of professional development dilemmas. However, it is important to note that in most cases, NA is associated with external factors, such as peer pressure and authoritative inaction, rather than internal factors such as teaching effectiveness and subject knowledge.

2.3 The job title differences

In the coding of NA in terms of job titles, a higher percentage of lines in the node indicated greater pressure for lecturers, with 11.88%, compared to 5.00% for associate professors. This finding suggested that young teachers in universities, especially lecturers, experienced higher levels of NA in their professional journey compared to associate professors. This observation was evident in the cases of almost every lecturer. For instance, in Case 3, the presence of NA became evident as young lecturers faced considerable challenges and pressures in their professional roles.

Case 3: *“I also have a sense of urgency and tension. I'm actually extremely anxious right now. Feeling useless and helpless. It's very frustrating, what can I do but try to move forward and keep on going.”*

In Case 7, the participant referred to the authoritative system when discussing the challenges, they encountered during their professional development.

Case 7: *“But the problem is that we do not grant some of the preferential rights that we were promised. For the teachers in our department, it is still quite uncomfortable.”*

In Case 8, the participant referred to the whole ecological system when discussing the challenges they encountered during their professional development.

Case 8: *“University teachers and researchers, especially young teachers, often deride themselves as 'green peppers' in China, referring to research, teaching and financial pressure as 'three big mountains(on their backs)'.”*

3. Demographic factors influencing PA of Chinese university EFL teachers

Regarding teachers' positive affect, this study identified 11 perceived PA experiences, demonstrating evident diversity similar to that observed in NA experiences. The findings indicated that teachers' perceived affective dimensions exhibited slightly greater diversity in second-class undergraduate universities compared to first-class undergraduate universities. On the other hand, vocational colleges showed fewer varieties of affective experiences. Indeed, first-class undergraduate universities reported relatively higher levels of affect in terms of feelings such as alert, attentive, determined, and interested. The relatively lower PA dimensions reported by vocational teachers were attributed to constraints such as the excessive workload of teaching and a low perception of self-efficacy and self-worth when facing their targeted teaching subjects, as evidenced in Case 4.

Table 3 The distribution of PA in relation to university ranks.

Positive affect	University ranks		
	first-class	Second-class	Vocational
	undergraduate	undergraduate	college (2)
	university (4)	university (3)	
Alert	62.5%	25%	12.5%
Attentive	66.67%	33.33%	0%
contented	40%	20%	40%
Determined	75%	25%	0%
Energetic	0%	100%	0%
Excited	0%	0%	100%
Grateful	33.33%	66.67%	0%
Happy	28.57%	57.14%	14.29%
Interested	66.67%	0%	33.33%
Proud	42.86%	28.57%	28.57%
Strong	0%	100%	0%
Total	45.65%	36.96%	17.39%
Unique	11.41%	12.32%	8.70%

The association between PA in the process of CPD and university ranks was evident; however, exceptional cases cannot be ignored, especially for teachers with better educational backgrounds, such as those with a PhD, who might face challenges in advancing in their job titles. This situation was observed in the first-class undergraduate university, where PA was slightly lower at 11.41%. It could be said that teachers held higher expectations regarding the support and opportunities that the university could offer. Consequently, this group of teachers faced significant challenges in cultivating more enriching PA experiences within the constrained environment and taking proactive initiatives in their pursuit of CPD.

4. Comparative analysis of the highly perceived dimensions of PA and NA

This study aimed to investigate the occurrence of PA and NA experiences and explore their correlation with different cases. The analysis of the data revealed that positive emotions were notably more frequent in Cases 1, 2, 6, and 9, which primarily involved female teachers with a Master's degree. In contrast, cases exhibiting a high frequency of negative emotions were more prevalent in Cases 3, 5, 7, 8, and 9, suggesting that NA was a common experience among

Chinese EFL university teachers during their CPD journey. Among these cases, three individuals held a PhD; three were male; and four were lecturers.

The prevalence of NA outweighed that of PA in the current status of CPD, highlighting the insufficient attention given to teachers' affective factors in their professional development. Prioritizing affectivity interactions was essential, as professional development could not be fully realized without addressing affectivity barriers (Wen, 2017). To ensure the positive development of EFL teachers during the CPD process, efforts should be directed towards fostering PA and minimizing NA as primary objectives.

5. Overview of the analysis of PA and NA of Chinese EFL university teachers in the context of CPD.

Table 4 The overview of the perceived PA and NA of Chinese EFL university teachers in the context of CPD

NA		PA	
Gender	M>F	University ranks	2nd class undergraduate university > 1st
Educational background	PhD > M.A.		class undergraduate university >
Job title	Lec. > Assoc. Prof.		Vocational college

An overview of Chinese EFL university teachers' perceptions of PA and NA in relation to CPD reveals the current situation. It clearly shows that male teachers as lecturers with a PhD degree are the groups with stronger NA. Teachers in second-class undergraduate universities experienced the highest levels of PA, possibly due to specific personal and contextual factors. It can be concluded that teachers experience more diversities of NA than those of PA during their process of CPD.

Discussions

1. Factors influencing teachers' affect perceptions in the process of CPD

The findings of the study suggested that teachers' affective perceptions during the process of CPD exhibited fewer dimensions compared to those observed in the two PANAS versions. Additionally, their perceptions of both PA and NA tended to be relatively concentrated, highlighting the specific nature of professional affect experienced by Chinese EFL university teachers.

Among the PA perceptions, attributes such as proud, grateful, happy, and alert stood out, with the term "attentive" displaying multi-level characteristics in the context of teaching profession and family responsibility. Conversely, the perceptions of NA for nervous, helpless, and distressed exhibited the highest prevalence. Teachers' experiences of NA in the context of CPD were found to be closely related to several factors, including gender, educational background, particularly with PhDs, and job title, specifically for lecturers. On the other hand, the main factor influencing teachers' PA experiences was university rank. Through comparative analysis, it was observed that teachers' perceptions of NA were relatively higher than their perceptions of PA.

This suggested that within the context of CPD, Chinese EFL university teachers had encountered both PA and NA experiences, irrespective of gender, educational background, job titles, or university ranks. However, when facing NA experiences during CPD, these internal struggles were often "ignored or understood but not externally supported," as mentioned in Case 7.

The external context of educational backgrounds and job title promotion had ensnared a significant number of teachers in a closed cycle of inconsistencies. Among the middle-aged teachers surveyed, who faced considerable pressure from family, profession, and society, a common predicament in their professional development was observed. This predicament was characterized by strong NA perceptions among PhD holders, stemming from the paradox of high expectations from others but a low perception of self-achievement.

The mutual support and understanding among colleagues created an environment where teachers could experience the most PA. For example, as mentioned in Case 3, one teacher expressed, *"My colleague also expressed extreme anxiety and she was very understanding of my state."* Additionally, the awareness and appreciation of teachers' unique identities in the context of CPD played a significant role in facilitating the transference from NA to PA.

2. Methods for regulating PA and NA in the context of CPD

2.1 Leveraging the platform of the communities

To foster innovative and efficient CPD influenced by PA, which contributes to the advancement of teachers' learning, teaching, and research, the establishment of a PA environment required specific external macro circumstances and internal micro catalysts. The harmonious coexistence within the microenvironment should primarily be grounded in PA, harnessed through leveraging the considerable potential of individuals and CPD communities. Teachers were encouraged to proactively organize themselves to enhance the microenvironment

in which they worked (Wen, 2017) and contributed to the development of professional ecological systems (Chen, 2020).

The causes of NA transfer were frequently intertwined with the teaching profession, leading to intricate NA tendencies within the existing CPD framework for Chinese EFL university teachers. To address these challenges, teachers were encouraged to proactively engage their agency by immersing themselves in relevant communities that foster their passion for teaching and facilitate the exchange of positive experiences. By doing so, teachers could transform themselves from introspective thinkers to interpersonal learners, particularly in challenging or negative circumstances.

Teachers should actively leverage the advantages of community platforms to channel and manage affect perceptions, thereby fostering healthy professional development and enhancing their overall well-being. Affective factors played a significant role in determining the expected effectiveness of CPD, and establishing a PA cycling was crucial for fostering healthy and sustainable CPD. Creating a harmonious atmosphere in their workplaces is vital to support this endeavor.

Participating in socially supportive and well-functioning communities could significantly contribute to establishing PA connections and enable teachers to proactively regulate their emotions (Burić & Moe, 2020). By engaging with such communities, teachers could effectively manage their affective experiences, leading to a more positive and fulfilling CPD journey.

2.2 Real-time regulation of PA

Teachers' real-time perception of affective identification and active channeling of affective experiences were beneficial for the positive transformation of teachers' NA, the effective enhancement of teaching practices, and the improvement of their overall professional well-being.

The accumulation of NA could undermine teachers' well-being and spirit. However, real-time perception enabled teachers to alleviate the impact of workload and learn to regulate their emotional state promptly, thereby reducing NA (Birditt, 2019) and facilitating a quicker recovery from adverse emotions. This process aided in the effective transference of NA, leading to better overall emotional resilience and well-being.

2.3 Promotion of rationalized public cognition of EFL university teachers in higher education

To effectively address the public's expectations of EFL teachers in universities, it is crucial to acknowledge and recognize the unique disciplinary identity that these teachers possess.

English is considered a fundamental tool subject with distinct functional differences in higher education in China. Consequently, the public's perception should remain flexible and open, taking into account the challenges faced by EFL university teachers and their role as General Education (GE) course instructors. It is essential to align public expectations of EFL teachers with the realities of their distinctive disciplinary identity, thereby mitigating social pressures arising from the functional disparities between various academic disciplines.

Implications from the Research

The study uncovered the intricate perceptions of Chinese EFL university teachers' PA and NA. It identified a new affectivity of "contented" for PA and specified "anger, contempt, dissatisfaction, disappointment and helplessness" as distinctive features of NA. Although teachers experienced more NA than PA throughout their CPD, extreme NA such as "afraid, ashamed, hostile, irritable, sacred, terrified" were not detected in their profession. This fact suggests that teachers' regulation of occupational affect is noticeably filtered and dignified for their professional identity. However, teachers' perceptions of NA outweighed PA providing evidence of urgency to protect the existing facilitators and search for potential supportive mechanisms. Furthermore, as a special discipline in higher education, it is especially important to prioritize the support of PhD lecturers who are navigating significant personal and contextual pressures in their struggle for CPD. This will serve as a pre-condition to mitigate potential internal frictions within these dedicated cohorts.

Conclusion

The present study extensively investigated the internal structure of PA and NA affective experiences among Chinese EFL university teachers in the context of their CPD. It offered a comprehensive understanding of the intricate and complex inner affective experiences related to their CPD journey. The study identified and summarized the dimensions of affective experiences among Chinese EFL university teachers during their CPD, delving into the potential causes of affective transfer and considering various factors, including disciplinary disadvantages, internal and interpersonal affect, hierarchical disparities in job titles, and gender identity within the context of CPD. Special emphasis was placed on the affective identity constraints encountered by teachers, with the primary objective of offering psychological support to EFL teachers experiencing pressure during their CPD. Given the multidimensional dispersion of teachers' affective experiences,

fostering PA and mitigating NA became critical prerequisites for promoting the healthy development of teachers' CPD.

Suggestions

For teachers in the personal development context, individual teachers can fully tender their inner affective with real-time regulation strategies to avoid being entangled by NA and actively transfer NA to PA in their pursuit of CPD. For teachers in the collective development context, teacher education systems should fully distinguish the occupational affective differences to develop the microenvironmental program caring for teachers' psychological well-being to improve the contextual advantages for teachers' teaching practice and effectiveness in the process of CPD.

The study has certain limitations as it did not significantly reveal novel themes. It merely supplemented the existing literature with several additional affective items. For future research, a more comprehensive approach that explores multiple emotional dimensions would be beneficial, moving beyond the sole focus on the two dimensions of PANAS. This broader perspective could offer a more in-depth understanding of the complexities of affective experiences among EFL university teachers during their CPD.

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